


**Exhibiting the Ivor Davies Archive of  
Destruction in Art: an exploration of curating  
historical performance art in the Museum**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of Aberystwyth University for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

**September 2017**

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<b>Word Count of thesis:</b> DECLARATION	57238 (excluding footnotes and references) Total word count: 68142
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# Abstract

This thesis outlines, documents and evaluates my Practice as Research contribution toward the curatorial process of addressing the specific material identity of Ivor Davies' performance work and destruction art practice for exhibition in National Museum Cardiff. The thesis comprises a contextual review (exploring the relationship between performance, curatorial practice and the Museum), exhibition case studies, and an analysis of the histories of Davies' destruction art-related 1960s performance practice as it has been disseminated through publications, archiving and exhibitions. It introduces the strategies applied to the presentation of these artworks in the context of the artist's 2015 solo retrospective exhibition – in particular, strategies of 'remediation' – and locates them in a differentiated understanding of the nature of the work on the one hand, and the needs of a museum exhibition on the other. The research proposes 'remediation' (as opposed to reconstruction, re-enactment and other reiterative strategies that are widespread in current curatorial practice) as a suitable strategy for exhibiting historical performance art in the Museum, which bases curatorial decisions not on the similarity to the original (historical) event, but on recovering and preserving key elements and performative qualities of the work, thus providing a continuum between historical and contemporary spectatorship. Through documentation and discussion of the curatorial strategies and processes applied (including archiving, exhibition design, and approaches to presentation) the thesis encourages reflection on the reproducibility of Davies' performance artworks and the influence that exhibition has on these works' appearance and experience. The thesis provides new insight into the materiality of Davies' performance work (exemplified in the exhibition particularly by the approach to the presentation of Davies' 1968 multimedia experimental theatre event, *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, and his performance-lecture at the 1966 Ravensbourne Symposium), which throws new light upon the formal diversity of performance in the UK in the late 1960s. By doing so, the thesis aims to provide substantial new insight into curatorial practice with relevance to the further study of exhibitions of historical performance art in museum contexts more broadly.

# Acknowledgments

This ambitious practice-led research project was only possible with the support of several people who continuously supported my work and whose guidance and friendship helped me throughout the writing of this thesis. My supervisors Professor Heike Roms and Jacqueline Yallop at Aberystwyth University; my external supervisor Nicholas Thornton, Head of Fine Art at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales; and Ivor Davies, who opened his unique archive for my research. My research would not have come to a successful completion without help from staff at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, particularly Rhodri Viney, Chris Harwick, Emily O'Reilly, Rose Miller, Pip Diment, Charlie Upton, Lee Jones, Simon Tozzo, Heidi Evans and Sian Lile-Pastore. I also thank artist Mike Pearson and his collaborators Anna Kelsey, Sam Barnes, Richard Huw Morgan and John Rowley, whose response to my invitation to re-perform 1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* exceeded all my expectations. I am grateful to those artists and curators who I interviewed during my research including Gustav Metzger, John Plant, Hanna B. Hölling, Rozemin Keshvani, Pedro Lagoa, László Beke, György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay. Thanks also to those who helped with documentation and provided access to artists and venues of historical performances, including Ula Dajerling (PA to Gustav), Pete Telfer (Culture Colony), Iola Baines (National Sound and Screen Archive Wales), and Schona Vrac-Lee and Rhia Cullen (Swansea University). I would also like to thank my friends who provided feedback at various phases of my research, Clive Robertson, Beata Hock, Georgia Dearden, Andre Stitt, Jenny Brownrigg, Emma Bolland and Brian Lewis. I am indebted to my family who supported my work for four years, Edit, Zoli, Balázs, Ellen, and Robert. And at last but most importantly, I would like thank my husband and best friend Roddy Hunter for his continuous help and encouragement without which I would have never got to the end.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Museums are increasingly required to address the place of historical performance art within their collections and exhibitions as they acquire work emerging from the 1960s – a period characterised, according to Lucy Lippard, by ‘the dematerialisation of the art object.’<sup>1</sup> The often purposefully ephemeral or precarious material basis of performance art challenges the capacity of curatorial approaches, particularly within the object-centred context of museums. This research project engages with the significant and timely concern of how to present historical performance art in the Museum through a curatorial Practice as Research (PaR)<sup>2</sup> project centred around the development of the exhibition, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (AC-NMW) in 2015.

The practice of artist Ivor Davies (b. Treharris, Wales, 1935) grew out of the avant-garde zeitgeist prevalent in the mid-twentieth century of exploring the deconstruction of the physical and material support of the artwork. His works are often conceived as performative, gestural actions, manifested either in multimedia and ephemeral performances, or through objects that are intentionally subjected to decay. Whilst later firmly locating the concerns of his work within a Welsh cultural context, in the 1960s Davies was an active correspondent in international artistic networks typified by ‘destruction art.’<sup>3</sup> In 2013, Aberystwyth University and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales initiated an AHRC-funded research

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<sup>1</sup> Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Here I use the term Practice as Research to refer to my work as ‘a research project in which practice is a key method of inquiry and where, (...) a practice is submitted as substantial evidence of a research inquiry’. Robin Nelson, “Introduction,” *Practice as Research in the Arts. Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, ed. Robin Nelson (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 9. DOI: 10.1057/9781137282910.

<sup>3</sup> See ‘Research Terminologies’ (1.5) in this thesis.

project through a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) to contribute toward a major exhibition on Davies' work to be held at National Museum Cardiff, which would later become *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* (19 November 2015 – 20 March 2016).<sup>4</sup>

The vexed relationship of performance art's material multiplicity, ephemerality and unique liveness to its dissemination and reproduction through forms of documentation and exhibition has been the subject of extensive critical discussion, particularly in the field of performance studies, since the 1990s. In parallel, the field of contemporary curatorial practice has taken a 'performative turn' as the causality and agency between artistic production, dissemination and reception loosen and at times blurs. The research seeks to apply the performative sensibility of contemporary curatorial practice to the apparently irreconcilable relationship between a historical performance artwork and its further dissemination. It does so to understand and contest the impact of the museological processes upon our understanding and interpretation of that work as contemporary spectators. This thesis outlines, documents and evaluates my PaR contribution toward the curatorial process addressing the specific 'material identity'<sup>5</sup> of Ivor Davies' destruction art related performance practice for exhibition in National Museum Cardiff. By doing so, it hopes to provide substantial new insight into curatorial practice with relevance to further study exhibitions of historical performance art in museum contexts more broadly.

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<sup>4</sup> The work of Ivor Davies, the CDA partnership and the background to the research will be introduced in more detail in Chapter 4. In this thesis Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales will be referred to as AC-NMW when discussing the CDA partnership, and as National Museum Cardiff when discussing the exhibition venue.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Research Terminologies' (1.5) in this thesis.

## 1.1. The Research Context

This thesis deals with the exhibition as a mode of preservation, dissemination and distribution of performance artworks from the 1960s, in particular in relation to Ivor Davies' practice, who – living in Edinburgh at the time – explored performance as a form of event-based sculptural practice engaged with kineticism, pyrotechnics, and destruction. Inspired by continental European avant-garde practices to deconstruct the material and formal properties of painting and sculpture, Davies became located in the international vanguard of mid-late twentieth century destruction art as participant and co-organiser – as a member of the Honorary Committee – of the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (also known as DIAS) in 1966. There he presented his demonstrations with explosions alongside artists, critics, publishers coming from all over the world including the Institute für Direkte Kunst,<sup>6</sup> John Latham, Robin Page, Bob Cobbing and Barbara Steveni from the UK, Wolf Vostell and Werner Schreib from Germany, Al Hansen, Raphael Montañez Ortiz (then known as Ralph Ortiz), Anthony Scott and Yoko Ono from the US, Jean-Jacques Lebel from France, Juan Hidalgo from Italy to name some. This international dimension of Davies' networks in the 1960s provided the basis for AC-NMW to initiate an ambitious exhibition demonstrating the artist's significance within and outside of the Welsh context. The exhibition – as the largest solo retrospective to date in the museum – reflects Davies' cultural engagement with Welsh language activism and the political and cultural dimensions of the major world events that impacted on his life and practice. While I supported every aspect of this exhibition as co-curator alongside Nicholas Thornton, Head of Fine Art at AC-NMW, my research considers in particular the presentation of Davies' performance practice between 1966 and 1968 as

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<sup>6</sup> The Institute für Direkte Kunst (Vienna Institute for Direct Art) was founded in June 1966 to represent the Vienna Actionists in London, including Otto Mühl, Günther Brus, Hermann Nitsch, who were joined by experimental film maker Kurt Kren, and critic Peter Weibel.

connected with his involvement with DIAS. The research builds on Heike Roms' previous AHRC-funded performance historiography project, *It Was Forty Years Ago Today – Locating the Early Histories of Performance Art in Wales between 1965-1979* (2009-2011), which identified Davies' performance practice as significant both in the context of Wales and internationally and positioned the artist's archive as a key resource for the exhibition project.<sup>7</sup>

The research is motivated by the seeming paradox of developing a curatorial approach to historical performance art that on the one hand recognises these works' temporality and ephemerality but on the other seeks to extend their life in ways that seemingly undermine their essentially non-reproducible nature. As a curator and scholar whose specialist knowledge concerns post-avant-garde practices in general, I have been drawn to the elusive nature of performance art and the subsequent social, sometimes face-to-face, encounter between artist and spectator. This encounter-oriented mode of spectatorship in performance art foregrounds what Marcel Duchamp described in 1957 as 'the two poles of the creation of art: the artist on one hand, and on the other the spectator who later becomes the posterity.'<sup>8</sup> The notion of the 'posterity' of the artwork as embodied by the spectator is vital to any possible exhibition of historical performance art. However, whereas there is often concern about how faithfully the archive can represent the 'here' and 'now' of the historical event, or the intentions of the artist, less consideration is arguably given to reintroducing the spectator to a direct, aesthetic experience of the work in the 'here' and 'now' of its later exhibition. The direct experience of the later spectator is further undermined by a tendency to exhibit historical performance art as if its material identity lies in its archival or residual medium

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<sup>7</sup> I discuss Roms' research as related to Davies' practice in section 4.1.1.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," 1957, *Ubu.com*, [http://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp\\_creative.html](http://www.ubu.com/papers/duchamp_creative.html) (accessed 15 April 2016).

(e.g. photographs, video recordings and the exhibition of relics as art objects) and thus similarly to traditional artworks (such as painting or sculpture) that exist as unique and portable objects. The encounter with historical performance art through such object-centred and documentary archival displays suggests a separation between ‘then’ and ‘now’, reinforcing a sense that the ‘original’ artwork (understood as the historical performance event) has disappeared. Such separation then creates a sense of distance to the work for the present spectator as observer, replacing the proximity that the historical spectator experienced as participant.

## **1.2. Research Aims, Questions and Objectives**

The research addresses the problem of the changing aesthetic experience of the artwork between the historical event and its later exhibition by aiming to provide a continuum between historical and contemporary spectatorship (and thus the posterity of the work). Methodologically this is achieved through drawing on both oral history and research of historical sites to understand the aesthetic experience of the historical spectator to inform the work’s appearance in the exhibition and address the aesthetic experience for the contemporary spectator.

The research questions are:

- How should Ivor Davies’ historical multimedia performance artworks be curated in the exhibition *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* at Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales, Cardiff (2015 - 16)?
- What are the broader implications for museological practice of an increasing desire to engage with the collection, preservation and presentation of historic performance art as cultural heritage?

The first question requires exploring different curatorial models to ascertain the possible options for presenting historical performance art, particularly in the context of the Museum. This aspect of the research involves establishing a range of perspectives to be considered by the curatorial team of *Silent Explosion*, including the artist. The ‘should’ of the question refers to the discursivity involved in decision-making in the curatorial development of the exhibition. It also refers to identifying the specific material identity of the artworks considered for inclusion and developing as far as possible a bespoke curatorial approach toward bringing these works to exhibition. Responding to this question furthermore entails identifying relevant and specific challenges, including those of authorship, authenticity, reproducibility, repeatability and remediation. These challenges are accentuated in the case of Ivor Davies’ work due to his specific interest in destruction as material transformation, which suggests that the purpose of the work is to resist reproduction and display. A further challenge lies in the fact that a retrospective exhibition expressively profiles ‘the extended life and reach of a given practice.’<sup>9</sup> How to do that given the ephemeral, precarious or even intangible existence of the artwork upon which that practice is based? And what is more, there is potentially an ideological conflict implied in a practice grounded in artistic, cultural or political dissent being institutionally recuperated by the Museum.

The second question builds on knowledge gained from a contextual review (Chapter 2) and case study discussion (Chapter 3) and presents *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* as a model (Chapter 4) to hopefully inform future exploration of the relationship between historical performance art and the Museum. Addressing the second question in terms of impact and potential transferability supports the research’s claim to

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<sup>9</sup> Ric Allsopp, “Dissemination,” *Performance Research* 11, no. 3 (‘A Lexicon’, 2006): 46.



originality and contribution to knowledge. The question is also approached from the external perspective of an independent contemporary art curator (the author Judit Bodor) encountering and engaging the National Museum, and so can also provide a model for non-institutional engagement with museological protocols and processes. The author's specialist practice also concerns working with artists' archives which may also have increasing relevance given the increasing prevalence of important artistic and cultural heritage residing within non-standardised, 'domestic' archives of artists. This research outlines possible approaches to preparing, preserving and drawing on that archival materiality as the primary source for exhibition-making, conservation and collection.

### **1.3. Research Factors**

There were several factors that influenced the research process and its outcomes. The research was undertaken in the context of a partnership between Aberystwyth University and AC-NMW. This was advantageous in providing a collaborative, professional and public context within which the research contributed centrally toward the production of an exhibition. That said, while the production of the exhibition and the conduct of the research were clearly interrelated, they each had differing dimensions, objectives, imperatives and outcomes. The research, for example, was particularly focused on developing the curatorial strategies for presenting Davies' 1960s performance artworks, whereas the exhibition engaged with the artist's practice across a range of media and from different historical periods of his career. It was important to prioritise the aims and objectives of the research whilst attention naturally became increasingly focused on the challenges of producing the exhibition. Whilst being something to be mindful of, this was far from presenting a major problem for the research; especially given that the curatorial team (Nicholas Thornton, Ivor Davies and I) decided to frame the artist's work for the exhibition as being essentially

engaged with destruction of one kind or another across his whole practice. This would relate to his interest in material destruction as a compositional strategy as well as his concern for the cultural destruction, as he saw it, of the Welsh language. Taking this approach proposed viewing Davies' entire practice through this critical lens, which meant that the positioning of his mid-late 1960s performance works became pivotal. In addition, the collegiate working relationship that I could develop within the museum staff led to unexpected opportunities that became important to the research, such as collaborating with conservators and technicians. These collaborations provided a basis on which to test in practice ideas of the 'changeability' and 'variability'<sup>10</sup> of the artworks and led to significant discoveries that have come to frame much of my findings.

A factor in curatorial Practice as Research relates to its function as a mediatory practice, meaning that the subject of research (in this case the historical performances of Ivor Davies) is engaged to an equal extent with curatorial questions of practice not necessarily solely germane to that subject alone (such as curating historical performance art in museums more broadly). This could present some difficulty when engaging with a living artist's body of work; the researcher, who is engaged in developing a new curatorial approach that communicates the research, may be more concerned for example with how the work will appear in a contemporary exhibition rather than in its historical manifestation. Thus, I would have to research both Davies' practice and its context as well as curatorial discourses and practices in the hope that at some point these would intersect. This parallel investigation has had methodological implications as discussed in the relevant section below.

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<sup>10</sup> See 'Research Terminologies' (1.5) in this thesis.

Another influencing factor on the research was the lack of publications about Davies' performance art practice. This meant that my research relied almost entirely on information gathered from the artist through (sometimes recorded) conversations and material in his private archival collection. While this provided a unique opportunity for primary research contributing to new knowledge, it also means that the future dissemination of this research remains conditional on the artist's consent. Another factor was the similar lack of publicly accessible documentation of curatorial processes that have informed exhibitions of historical performance art. The nature of curatorial work is collaborative and intricate, which makes the dissemination of the research that informs such work difficult. Documents providing insight into the making of exhibitions are rarely published in exhibition catalogues or otherwise, and so the process remains virtually invisible and secondary to the visual analysis of the exhibited artworks or the published interviews with artists and curators regarding their intentions. Among the reasons why museums and curators may not be publishing much about the curatorial process are what performance and video choreographer Johannes Birringer describes as 'issues of institutional paranoia' as well as 'the splendid narcissism of some artists.'<sup>11</sup> And as Jon Ippolito adds 'although we describe the curatorial drive as "presentation," in practice it's just as much about hiding.'<sup>12</sup> Given this, the research needed to be developed in a way that allowed insight into the curatorial research and process, continuous documentation and the ability to talk about my findings whilst respecting the wishes of those involved in the process to keep certain things confidential.

Finally, and most importantly, the central factor of being the co-curator of *Silent*

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<sup>11</sup> Johannes Birringer, "re: The Way We Share," *New Media Curating Discussion List* (JISC-Mail), 14 March 2013, <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind1303&L=NEW-MEDIA-CURATING&F=&S=&P=22039> (accessed 23 March 2016).

<sup>12</sup> Jon Ippolito, "re: The Way We Share," *New Media Curating* (JISC-Mail), 14 March 2013, <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind1303&L=NEW-MEDIA-CURATING&F=&S=&P=22039> (accessed 23 March 2016).

*Explosion* allowed first-hand experience of the curatorial process of exhibiting historical performance artworks in the context of a temporary museum exhibition. This opportunity led to a different kind of research and understanding of exhibition-making practice than what I could have explored through reading about theories of performance art or looking at documentation of exhibitions alone.

#### **1.4. Research Methodologies and Outcomes**

According to curators Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, the process of 'research in-and-through' practice has 'not been sufficiently problematised in the field of curatorial practice,' compared to the field of artistic practice.<sup>13</sup> One problem is that, while the discourse on artistic research acknowledges artists' work as 'authentic' through their authorship of 'autonomous' works of art, the discourse of what might constitute curatorial research is problematised by the understanding of curatorial practice as being 'contingent' and 'caught in the fields of tension across multiple actors and apparatuses.'<sup>14</sup> According to the authors, although this multiplicity is apparent in both artistic and curatorial processes, artists have been traditionally considered the creative 'self-determining agents'<sup>15</sup> of the production of artworks, while curatorial work is often regarded as 'parasitical'<sup>16</sup> unless it is practised by artists. In the last fifteen years, parallel to the development of many postgraduate academic courses in curating, there has been a strong drive to establish curating as a critical, creative and collaborative research practice, mostly by independent curators under the new term of 'the curatorial.'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Paul O'Neill, and Mick Wilson eds. *Curating Research* (Amsterdam: De Appel / Open Editions, 2015), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Esche, "Coda: The Curatorial," in *The Curatorial. A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. Jean-Paul Martinon (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 241-245.

<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of 'the curatorial'.

The research aims to address this issue by making the curatorial process transparent through documentation and using the thesis as a reflection on my curatorial Practice as Research. My methodology combines archiving with curating through practical research methods, including:

- cataloguing and annotating the archival documents collected by Ivor Davies relating to the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium and his own performance practice between 1966 and 1968
- conducting research on Davies' 1960s performances from material kept in the artist's archive and through conversations with the artist
- conducting research on the interpretation of Davies' performances since the 1960s in the contemporary press, later research projects and exhibitions
- visiting, mapping and documenting sites where the Destruction in Art Symposium and Davies' performances took place
- interviewing Davies as well as two contemporary witnesses of his works, Gustav Metzger (initiator of DIAS) and John Plant (student at Swansea University in the 1960s and the organiser of Davies' only performance in Wales at the time, *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*)
- researching exhibition models through visiting exhibitions, interviewing curators, and participating in talks and writing case studies
- generating an exhibition design for *Silent Explosion* (informed by a training course in exhibition design and research of exhibition models)
- developing creative approaches to presenting Davies' 1960s through remediation
- developing a series of public seminars to test how such discursive events might provide a platform for knowledge production through the collective evaluation of the exhibition (involving both museum staff and visitors)

## 1.5. Research Terminologies

The present thesis makes use of some key concepts and terminologies that I have adopted from the fields of art history, contemporary curatorial practice, performance studies and new media conservation for the purposes of my research. I use ‘historical performance art’ as an umbrella term to refer to examples of post-avant-garde ‘time-based’<sup>18</sup> artworks when discussing the present problematics of their exhibition. However, when discussing these artworks in their historical context I describe them with terms used by artists and contemporaries at the time of their conception. In Ivor Davies’ case, for example, I will use terms such as sculptural demonstration, happening, experimental theatre event or spectacle to refer to different historical works.

Furthermore, in my use of the term ‘destruction art’ I follow art historian Kristine Stiles’ understanding of it as:

An attitude, a process and a way of proceeding, destruction art is both reactionary and responsive; it is not an aesthetic, nor a method, nor a technique. Destruction art is an ethical position comprised of diverse practices that investigate the engulfment of terminal culture.<sup>19</sup>

I also adopt Stiles’ distinction between ‘destruction art’ as ‘a concise index of a wide anthropological field’ and ‘destruction in art,’ which ‘emphasizes the processes that determine its practices within the institutions of art.’<sup>20</sup> The term ‘destruction in art’ is used in

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<sup>18</sup> The term ‘time-based art’ or sometimes ‘time-based media art’ is used in museum context to refer to ‘moving images, film installations, video, performance, motion- and sound-based works, and other works that represent time or duration’. Source: “Media & Performance Art,” *Moma.org*, <https://www.moma.org/explore/collection/departments/media> (accessed 23 June, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Kristine Stiles, “Thresholds of Control: Destruction Art and Terminal Culture,” in *Out of Control*, eds. Gottfried Hattinger and Karl Gerbel (Linz: Ars Electronica & Landesverlag, 1991), 29. Reprinted in Timothy Duckery ed. *Ars Electronica: Facing the Future (A Survey of Two Decades)* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 9. [www.aec.at/en/archiv\\_files/19911/E1991\\_029.pdf](http://www.aec.at/en/archiv_files/19911/E1991_029.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> See Kristine Stiles, “Essay on Destruction Art,” in *Book for the Unstable Media* (V2\_, 1992), n.p, <http://v2.nl/archive/articles/selected-comments-on-destruction-art> (accessed 15 October 2014).

this thesis specifically to refer to the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), which provided the context for destruction art performances. Stiles' more extended definition of 'destruction art' is useful as it allows for an exploration of Davies' relationship to destruction both in relation to and reaching beyond DIAS as the symposium provided the context for only some of his performances I have researched for the exhibition. It is also through this extended definition that a connection could be drawn in the context of the 2015/16 retrospective exhibition between the artist's 1960s performance practice and the rest of his career as a painter.

The term 'destruction in art' is also used to refer to The Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive (referred to as Ivor Davies DiA Archive) This is the title given to the annotated index of the documents I catalogued from Davies' larger archival collection relating to his participation in DIAS, 1966 and his own performance practice 1966-1968. I wish to differentiate this material 'archival collection' from the term 'the archive', that I use throughout this thesis to refer to the expanded archival materiality of Davies' historical performances, which includes both the tangible and intangible elements that have ensured the survival of these works since their conception (documents, relics as well as memories, exhibitions and other forms of reinterpretation). The understanding of performance as expanded archival materiality defined the presentation of Davies' 1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in the exhibition (see 4.3.2.3.) and corresponds with ideas discussed in Chapter 2 around performance as an 'aesthetics of change'; especially art historian Christopher Bedford's notion of performance art as an 'extended trace history,' which 'begins with the performance, but whose manifestations may extend, theoretically, to infinity.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Christopher Bedford, "The Viral Ontology of Performance," in *Perform, Repeat, Record. Live Art in History*, eds. Amelia Jones, and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect and University of Chicago Press, 2012), 78.

I adapted the term ‘identity’ in this thesis from time-based media conservation. As Tate’s conservator Pip Laurenson explains, while the term ‘original state’ is conventionally used to describe the unique material condition of art objects including ‘everything that can be defined or discovered about an object by observation, measurement or analysis’, the term ‘identity’ is preferable to describe the changeable material condition of time-based artworks (installations and performance art) including ‘everything that must be preserved in order to avoid the loss of something of value in the work of art.’<sup>22</sup>

Finally, throughout this thesis I use the terms ‘variability’ and ‘changeability’, used in contemporary art conservation and curation to discuss the characteristics of examples of artworks in ‘unstable media,’<sup>23</sup> which are counter to our understanding of art as a permanent, portable object. ‘Variability’ is used in museums since 1999 to refer to changes that are permitted by the artist in the appearance of an artwork as part of collections and exhibitions. I introduce this term further when discussing the Variable Media Approach in Chapter 2. ‘Changeability’ is a wider term referring to change as a fundamental characteristic of post-1960s avant-garde (including performance art). It can refer to the inherent changeability of artworks such as Fluxus event scores that expressly encourage reinterpretation, as well as changes undergone by artworks entering Museum collections or exhibitions where a historical event might become an object-relic, or an analogue film might become a digital DVD. I introduce changeability in detail in discussing the work of conservator scholar Hanna B. Hölling in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (Case Study 2.). I then use it to discuss the

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<sup>22</sup> Pip Laurenson, “Authenticity, Change and Loss in the Conservation of Time-Based Media Installations,” *Tate Papers* 6 (Autumn 2006), n.p., [http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations#footnote3\\_7ookp5w](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/06/authenticity-change-and-loss-conservation-of-time-based-media-installations#footnote3_7ookp5w) (accessed 12 June, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Alex Adriaansens, and Joke Brouwer eds. *Book for the Unstable Media* (Amsterdam: V2, 1992).



changeability of Davies' performances in Chapter 4; first in reviewing their pre-2013 exhibition histories, and then in discussing my curatorial approach to the 1968 multimedia performance *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in the 2015 retrospective.

## 1.6. Thesis Structure

The curatorial process and its outcomes are presented here through a written thesis and accompanying documentation.<sup>24</sup> The thesis comprises five chapters. The present Chapter 1 (Introduction) outlines the research context, the questions I am investigating in relation to the wider issue of exhibiting historical performance art and my Practice as Research response upon which the thesis expands. Chapter 2 (Contextual Review) explores the issue in greater depth by introducing significant theories alongside curatorial models that have emerged since the late 1990s regarding the *re-presentation* – in the sense of 'standing-in-for' as well as 'showing again' – of historical performance art. This chapter aims to introduce those bodies of knowledge from which the research both emerges and which it seeks to critique. To situate the research within a broader, transdisciplinary framework of reference I first discuss ideas about the material identity of performance art as an aesthetics of 'disappearance', where documentation is considered as a substitution (but not part of) the artwork, which is defined as the (disappeared) historical event. I follow this with a discussion of performance as an 'aesthetics of change' through concepts such as 'material multiplicity', 'viral ontology', 'variability', 'changeability', 'remediation' and 'proliferate preservation'. Following the exploration of the ontology of performance as either disappearing or changeable, I continue with a phenomenological consideration of the later aesthetic experience of these works in

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<sup>24</sup> The thesis includes the discussion of several exhibitions and artworks in Chapter 2, where I provide the sources of documentation in footnotes. In Chapter 3 and 4 I use reproductions of images with permission from copyright holders, except in the case of Chapter 3, Case Study 1. (*Partners*) where I couldn't gain access to the copyright holder. All video and audio documentation of the research outcomes (exhibition and related programme of events) is available online [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive).

‘documentary exhibitions’, ‘re-enactments’ and ‘performative exhibitions’. In doing so I demonstrate how curators switched focus from exhibiting the documentary material of historical events (photographs, video documentation and relics) to prioritising ‘liveness’ and ‘presence’ in exhibitions whilst maintaining or challenging the artist’s singular authorship. The chapter identifies the subject as one of apparent and frequent consternation, frustration and antagonism, which provides an argument for the necessity and potential of Practice as Research as undertaken here. Chapter 3 then builds on some of the exhibitions I introduce in Chapter 2 as emerging, ‘performative’ models of curatorial practice (*Moments*, 2010 and *Notes on a Return*, 2009), which I consider able to reintroduce the spectator as participant into the re-presentation of performance. It introduces three exhibition case studies (*Partners*, 2003; The Budapest *Poïpoïdrome*, 1976 / 1998; and *Revisions: Zen for Film*, 2015) that particularly informed my thinking toward developing strategies for exhibiting Davies’ historical performance art in *Silent Explosion*. I identified these case studies at different points of the research process in response to specific challenges we were facing with the exhibition. *Partners* provided a case study for thinking about presenting history through a contemporary perspective and the creative role of the curator as exhibition *auteur*. The Budapest *Poïpoïdrome* 1976 / 1998 by Robert Filliou was an opportunity to explore the work of artist-curator György Galántai’s reconstruction as a model for re-presenting historical performance-based and participatory environments. Finally, Hanna B. Hölling’s curation of Nam June Paik’s *Zen for Film* allowed thinking about how exhibitions can communicate the changeability and material multiplicity of historical performance art to the contemporary spectator. Altogether, these case studies provide an insight into the critical sources that I used as ‘touchstones’ in developing ideas around *Silent Explosion*.

The exploration and identification of the context, problem and models of practice is

followed by a reflection on my own practice in Chapter 4 as research that seeks to apply the performative sensibility of contemporary curatorial practice (identified in Chapter 3) in a museum context to understand and contest the impact of the museological processes upon our understanding and interpretation of historical performance work as contemporary spectators. This longer chapter is divided into three main sections. This first section introduces the background and context of the research in detail and presents my findings from primary research into Davies' 1966-1968 performance practice, its dissemination and reception history in the context of exhibitions and research scholarship before 2013. The following two sections document, describe, and evaluate the curatorial approach to presenting the archive of Davies' historical performances in *Silent Explosion* as it emerged between 2013 and 2015 through a collaborative curatorial process between the artist, the Museum and I. In these sections I analyse my archival-curatorial contribution that I have introduced earlier, in detail. Finally, in Chapter 5 I draw conclusions from my findings and evaluate the outcomes of the research before finishing with briefly outlining the scope for future exploration.

## CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

While my practice focuses specifically on exhibiting the archive of Ivor Davies' 1960s performance art, my research needs to be positioned within a wider field of practice and scholarship that considers the relationship between performance and exhibition making in contemporary art. This field traverses performance studies, contemporary curating and new media conservation in addressing what Sophie Berrebi and Hendrik Folkerts recently described as the shift from 'historicising performance' to the 'museification of performance.'<sup>25</sup> While the former points to a predominantly visual discourse in which much discussion around the in/visibility of performance emerges from the field of performance studies and art history, the latter points toward a predominantly materially focused cultural discourse, within which the changeability and the medium-independent characteristics of artworks are increasingly considered in new media conservation and contemporary curatorial practice. In the following I will discuss ideas around performance as an 'aesthetics of disappearance' and as an 'aesthetics of change' as they have emerged through these discourses as well as the implications therein for performance art's entry into art histories and museum collections.

I will start with the exploration of performance as an aesthetics of disappearance

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<sup>25</sup> Sophie Berrebi, and Hendrik Folkerts, "The Place of Performance," *Stedelijk Studies* 3 (2016): 1-3, [http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/beheer/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Stedelijk-Studies\\_The-Place-of-Performance\\_Editorial\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/beheer/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Stedelijk-Studies_The-Place-of-Performance_Editorial_PDF.pdf) (accessed 7 December 2016).

particularly through Peggy Phelan's 1993 book *Unmarked – The Politics of Performance*<sup>26</sup> and consequent discussions on 'documentation' and 'evidence' particularly through the writings of Amelia Jones,<sup>27</sup> Philip Auslander,<sup>28</sup> and Heike Roms.<sup>29</sup> I then continue to explore the possibility of performance as an aesthetic of change by reviewing the extended discourse on 'the archive', which has led to wider questions about the nature of 'performance as archive' and the 'legacy' of performance art through 'archival practices.'<sup>30</sup> I will then include critical positions as developed by new media conservators and curators around the question of how performance art may be maintained, preserved and presented in a collections environment. Issues that I discuss here relate to performance's 'changeability'<sup>31</sup> and 'repeatability.'<sup>32</sup>

Although the discourses that have emerged in different fields seem to overlap, they

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<sup>26</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London: Routledge, 1993.

<sup>27</sup> Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (1997): 11-18; and "Temporal Anxiety/'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," in *Archeologies of Presence*, eds. Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye, and Michael Shanks (London - New York: Routledge, 2012), 197-222.

<sup>28</sup> Philip Auslander, *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London – New York: Routledge, 1999); "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *Performing Arts Journal* 84 (September 2006), retrieved from <http://lmc.gatech.edu/~auslander/publications/28.3auslander.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2014); and "Surrogate Performances: Performance Documentation and the New York Avant-garde, ca. 1964 - 74," in *On Performativity (Living Collections Catalogue 1)*, ed. Elizabeth Carpenter (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2014), n.p., <http://walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/surrogate-performances> (accessed 17 January 2017).

<sup>29</sup> Heike Roms, "Mind the Gaps: Evidencing Performance and Performing Evidence in Performance Art History," in *Theatre History and Historiography: Ethics, Evidence and Truth*, eds. Claire Cochrane and Joanna Robinson, (Basingstoke, 2016), 163-181.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Rebecca Schneider, "(Archives) Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6, (2001): 100-108; Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire. Cultural Memory and Performance in the Americas* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003); Andre Lepecki, and Stephanie Rosenthal, "Archive: Introduction," in *Move: Choreographing You*, ed. Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Hayward Gallery, 2010), 133; and Heike Roms, "Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains?," in *Performing Archives / Archives of Performance*, eds. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), 35-52.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Hanna B. Hölling, *Revisions: Zen for Film* (New York: Bard Graduate Centre and University of Chicago Press, 2015); and Paik's *Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (University of California Press, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> Pip Laurenson, and Vivian van Saaze, "Collecting Performance-Based Art: New Challenges and Shifting Perspectives," in *Performativity in The Gallery: Staging Interactive Encounters*, eds. Outi Remes, Laura MacCulloch, and Marika Leino (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014), 27-41.

also have specific perspectives according to the disciplines from which they develop. For example, while scholarship in the field of new media conservation focuses on maintaining the material identity of performance-based artworks, research in the field of contemporary curatorial practice engages more with performative knowledge-production through event-based exhibition practice under the new term of ‘the curatorial.’<sup>33</sup> As a result of the increasing number of performance-based artworks that are entering collections, new research in museum practice has emerged around the ‘exhibitability’ and ‘repeatability’ of historical performance art. This research aims to replace the exhibition of relics and material archives as evidence of past events with the reproduction of live experiences, thus connecting the historical unfolding of the act (the artwork as durational event) and the unfolding of the act in history (the afterlife of performance).

I have structured the following contextual review into two major sections. The first section, ‘Performance, Documentation and the Archive,’ provides an overview of scholarly work on the relationship between event, document and an extended understanding of the archive. The second section, ‘Performance, Curating and the Museum,’ explores the relationship between performance and exhibition-making and analyses dominant approaches to exhibiting historical performance art since the late 1990s. These include exhibitions that take historical performance art as their subject as well as performative exhibitions in which the act of exhibiting itself taken as a performance reflects the processual, time-based and dialogic nature of the source event.

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<sup>33</sup> See for example Paul O’Neill, “The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse,” in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, eds. Judith Rugg, and Marianne Sedgwick (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 13-28; Maria Lind, “The Curatorial,” *Artforum* 103 (October 2009): 65-103; Beatrice von Bismarck, Jörn Schafaff, and Thomas Weski eds. *Cultures of the Curatorial* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

## 2.2. Performance, Documentation and the Archive

In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993), Peggy Phelan offers a seminal discussion of performance as an ephemeral, disappearing and non-reproducible event. Through an analysis of the politics of visibility in capitalist society, Phelan argues that as performance (as cultural practice including, but not limited to, performance art) disappears, it has the essential power to resist the ‘reproductive representation necessary to the circulation of capital.’<sup>34</sup>

While acknowledging that performance is often remembered through documentation, Phelan notes that documentation fundamentally alters performance through its commodifiable reproduction. Phelan argues that the ‘generative possibilities of disappearance’ in performance are therefore a strategic alternative to the ‘reproduction of the Other as the Same’ in the representational economy.<sup>35</sup> Phelan’s position thus problematises the notion that performance’s life can be extended beyond memory, due to its inherent ephemerality. In a 2003 interview Phelan returns to her argument to explain that her intention was not to deny the usefulness of documentation as information about a performance, but to emphasise that ephemerality (disappearance) is fundamental to the experience of performance, similar to how the awareness of ‘mortality’ is ‘fundamental to the experience of embodiment.’<sup>36</sup> She also explains that while she uses documentation to teach about historical performances, the argument she developed in the 1990s was a deliberate attempt to steer scholarship away from ‘a descriptive fixation on what performance enacted’ to wider questions about ‘historiography, psychoanalysis, trauma and, therefore, ethics.’<sup>37</sup>

The idea of an opposing ontological relationship between the historical performance

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<sup>34</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 148.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 and 148.

<sup>36</sup> Peggy Phelan (in conversation with Marquard Smith), “Performance, Live Culture and Things of The Heart,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 2, no. 3 (2003): 291-302. DOI: 10.1177/1470412903002003002.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

event and its documentation has been critiqued from different perspectives in the fields of art history, media studies as well as performance studies since the late 1990s, leading eventually to an extended discourse on ‘the archive.’ Art historian Amelia Jones and media and performance studies scholar Philip Auslander, for example, have problematised the oppositional ontological relationship between performance and documentation that Phelan’s book suggests. In her 1997 essay ‘Presence in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation,’ Jones examines the body art works of Carolee Schneemann, Yayoi Kusama and Annie Sprinkle to demonstrate that while not being present at these historical performances due to her age presents a ‘logistical’<sup>38</sup> problem, it does not imply that her knowledge of the artworks gained through the experience of documentation is secondary to those who were present at the historical event. Jones argues that while these live and mediated experiences are different, ‘neither has a privileged relationship to the historical “truth” of the performance’<sup>39</sup> as both lead to partial knowledge. While the live experience brings the immediate context of the performance into the focus of participants, the later spectator of documents can analyse the artwork retrospectively within its social, political, cultural and historical context. In her following publications<sup>40</sup> Jones further argues for the importance of documentary practices (especially art historical writing) in fighting the ‘dangerous and purposeful erasures of evidence from the past’ in what she calls ‘the age of forgetting.’<sup>41</sup> As an art historian Jones sees the importance of documentation in counteracting the marginalisation of performance art within mainstream histories of art, which presents a

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<sup>38</sup> Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia,” 11.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See for example *Body art/Performing the subject*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); “‘The Artist is Present’: Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 55, no.1 (2011): 16-45; and Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*.

<sup>41</sup> Jones, “Temporal Anxiety,” 201.



different agenda to Phelan's, who argues for the political power of disappearance in order to critique 'cultural reproduction' that enforces the repetition of dominant narratives.<sup>42</sup>

Auslander too moves away from Phelan's suggestion of a binary opposition between performance and documentation. In *Liveness*,<sup>43</sup> he argues instead for a mutual dependence of the 'live' and 'mediatized' in suggesting that performance is always already mediatized and certain examples of performance practice (such as performance-for-camera) cannot be experienced live, only as documentation. In a 2014 essay on the New York Avant-garde,<sup>44</sup> Auslander further argues that documentation itself can also be performative and constitute, rather than illustrate, performance. One example he gives is Vito Acconci's *Trademarks* (1970),<sup>45</sup> a limited series of lithographic prints produced by the artist from a private performance for camera. These lithographs combine photographs of the artist sitting naked on the floor biting himself, the close-up images of the bite marks, his written commentary on the event and the prints of bite-marks, produced by inking the marks and stamping on paper and other surfaces. For Auslander, Acconci's decision to include the written commentary as an 'act of documentation' in the print 'performatively frame[s] his actions as performance.'<sup>46</sup>

While Auslander's and Jones's disciplinary perspectives might be different, both authors concur that documentation allows knowledge of a performance despite the disappearance of the event. Auslander even points out that many performances in the 1960s and 1970s were not documented because they were culturally significant at the time but

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<sup>42</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 27.

<sup>43</sup> Auslander, *Liveness*.

<sup>44</sup> Auslander, "Surrogate Performances," n.p.

<sup>45</sup> Vito Acconci. *Trademarks* (1970), Minneapolis: Walker Art Centre Collection, <https://walkerart.org/collections/artworks/trademarks> (accessed 23 January 2016).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p.

became significant historically because they were documented at all in the first place.<sup>47</sup> He also goes further by suggesting that performance documentation can even exist without an actual event. An example through which Auslander's point can be demonstrated is Allan Kaprow's *Time Pieces* (1973),<sup>48</sup> for which the artist produced a series of posters he called 'activity booklets' to represent a performance that was yet to happen. As Glenn Phillips records in his essay on this particular piece, the artist considered these booklets as 'illustrations' of an idea rather than documentation of an event, which functions similarly to 'an instruction manual or diagrammed play for a football game.'<sup>49</sup> Both Kaprow's *Time Pieces* and Acconci's *Trademarks* are examples of what Auslander calls 'the performativity of performance documentation,'<sup>50</sup> where the document and the event are materially different iterations of the same artwork by realising the idea through different media.

While this is not discussed as such by her critics, I argue that Phelan's exploration of documentation in *Unmarked* also touches upon the possibility of performative documentation through her discussion of Sophie Calle's 1990 work *Last Seen*.<sup>51</sup> Calle created this work after a theft of significant art objects from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. In the work Calle asked museum staff to describe what they remembered of the stolen pieces and then displayed the transcription of people's memories alongside photographs of the empty galleries next to the museum's own display of the photographs of the stolen artworks. Phelan

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Allan Kaprow, *Time Pieces* (1973), Collection of Fondazione Bonotto, <http://www.fondazionebonotto.org/en/collection/fluxus/kaprowallan/9619.html> (accessed 23 March 2016).

<sup>49</sup> Kaprow cited in Glenn Phillips, "Time Pieces," in *Allan Kaprow – Art as Life*, eds. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk, and Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 35.

<sup>50</sup> Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," n.p.

<sup>51</sup> Sophie Calle, *Last Seen* (1990), Collection of The Bohen Foundation, New York, *Moma.org*. [https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1999/muse/artist\\_pages/calle\\_lastseenvermeer.html](https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/1999/muse/artist_pages/calle_lastseenvermeer.html) (accessed 20 March 2016).

argues that while the museum's approach was 'documentary' to evidence the existence of the lost works, Calle's work was 'performative' in providing a 'continuing presence' for them.<sup>52</sup> As such – as says Phelan – Calle does not aim to replace the lost objects but uses documentation (written records of memory and photos of the empty space) performatively 'to restage and restate the effort to remember what is lost.'<sup>53</sup>

The scholarship that has developed around the status of performance documentation has opened new possibilities for a wider discussion about the archive and archival practices. This discussion has dominated performance research since the 2000s. Rebecca Schneider's writings,<sup>54</sup> for example, position performance as part of an archival culture that is different from the Western 'logic of the Archive,' which retrieves cultural knowledge only through material remains.<sup>55</sup> Comparable to Diana Taylor's concept of 'the repertoire,'<sup>56</sup> Schneider argues that cultural knowledge of performance can be retrieved from acts of 'ritual repetition,' which she also describes as 'citational' acts through which historical events do not disappear but remain 'differently.'<sup>57</sup> However, while Schneider replaces physical documentation with embodied practices as ways to transmit knowledge, Taylor sees the two as interdependent processes that work together in transmitting cultural memory, knowledge and identity.<sup>58</sup> Both authors extend the idea of performative documentation to embrace a performative mode of documenting, in which the knowledge of performance is generated and transmitted through the difference between its variations. While no repetition of performance can be the same as the ones before it (in this sense performance remains non-reproducible),

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<sup>52</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> See for example Rebecca Schneider, "(Archives) Performance Remains," *Performance Research* 6 (2001): 100-108; *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011); and "Performance remains again," in Giannachi, Kaye, Shanks *Archaeologies of Presence*, 64 – 81.

<sup>55</sup> Schneider, "(Archives) Performance Remains," 100.

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 2.

<sup>57</sup> Schneider, "(Archives) Performance Remains," 103 and 106.

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 21.

the perpetual reworking of performance through performative iterations (variations) allow the continuation of the basic characteristics of the artwork that the spectator can recognise despite the difference in their appearance. The idea that performance survives through archival acts provides the possibility for understanding the artwork as a lineage of interpretations where there is no ‘original,’ or rather where each variation is ‘original’ and contributes to the emergence of the work over time. I will return to this point when discussing ‘reinterpretation’ and ‘remediation’ in the context of new media conservation later in this chapter and again when reflecting on my own practice in Chapter 4.

A broader perspective on the materiality of performance art can be drawn from curator Jacob Lillemose’s essay, *Conceptual Transformation of Art*.<sup>59</sup> In this the author rethinks the concept of ‘dematerialisation’, a prominent notion proposed by Lucy Lippard to describe 1960s and 1970s post-avant-garde visual art practices in which ‘the matter is denied’ or ‘transformed into energy and time-motion.’<sup>60</sup> Lillemose redefines the term in relation to what he calls ‘post-object’ works of new media and networked art practices that are rooted in 1960s-70s conceptual art and that, so says Lillemose, ‘have a horizontal distributed and open-ended structure, anticipate direct and versatile interactive communication and be connected to a heterogeneous and interdependent contextual relations that blur established positions and boundaries.’<sup>61</sup> Unlike a widespread understanding of the dematerialisation of the art object as a historically bounded concept referring to either the ‘critique of the object’ or the ‘dismissal

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<sup>59</sup> Jacob Lillemose, “Conceptual Transformation of Art: From Dematerialisation of The Object To Immateriality in Networks,” in *Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems*, DATA Browser 03, ed. Joasia Krysa (New York: Autonomedia, 2006), 117-139.

<sup>60</sup> Lippard, *Six Years*, 43.

<sup>61</sup> Lillemose, “Conceptual Transformation of Art,” 126.

of materiality,' Lillemose's redefinition proposes a concept that is ahistorical and that we can consider as a reference to 'material multiplicity' or 'contextual materiality' in art.<sup>62</sup> He argues that through rethinking, we can separate the notion of materiality from an artwork's physical objecthood and allow a connection with processes such as 'continuous conceptual recoding, reorganisation, redistribution, recontextualisation and reinterpretation' as material elements.<sup>63</sup> Just like through Schneider's ideas, Lillemose's new definition of dematerialisation enables an exploration of the interdependent relationship of materiality and immateriality in performance. While Schneider redefines performance as that which remains but differently, Lillemose redefines dematerialisation as that which is a material aesthetics but realised differently. The extended notion of the archive of Schneider and Taylor – in which repetition can be considered as a form of documentation – and the extended notion of dematerialisation proposed by Lillemose – in which reinterpretation can be considered as the work's materiality – merge in Christopher Bedford's redefinition of performance as 'viral' ontology where the historical event 'splinters, mutates, multiplies over time infinitely in the hands of various critical constituencies in a variety of media.'<sup>64</sup> Schneider, Taylor, Lillemose and Bedford all propose ideas that allow the rethinking of 'originality' and 'authenticity' in performance by arguing for its survival regardless of the non-reproducibility of the event as 'originally' conceived by the artist.

A slightly different position relating to the extended concept of the archive is proposed by performance scholar Heike Roms, whose 'historio-dramaturgical'<sup>65</sup> approach focuses on how performance histories are performed by those who care for the archive, using her own practice of archiving early histories of Welsh performance art as example. Roms

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>64</sup> Bedford, "The Viral Ontology of Performance," 78.

<sup>65</sup> Roms, "Mind the Gaps," 165.

argues that the research of performance histories is itself a performative practice in that it evidences these historical events by producing knowledge about them. Her approach moves away from the issue of the reproducibility of the historical event to engage with ‘an extended artistic oeuvre and the manner in which its remains are cared for.’<sup>66</sup> Regarding the reliability of documentation as evidence she points out that many documents of performance (sketches, drawings or scores the artist made before the event, and audience responses after the event) are often evidence of the artists’ intention (the underlying ideas that constitute the conceptual materiality of artworks) than what has been realised in the actual event. Roms argues that the ‘legacy’ of historical performance (what we know about them and how we know them) is constructed as a communal effort over time, partly undertaken by the memories of the artists and partly by the practices of those who take care of these works’ archive, including artists’ estates, families, archivists, curators and conservators.

Performance scholarship has over the last ten years become a truly transdisciplinary discourse between art history, performance studies, museum studies and contemporary curating. The resulting perspectives on the expanded concept of the archive seem to replace the idea of performance as an ‘aesthetics of disappearance’ with performance as an ‘aesthetics of change.’ Such an understanding of performance art as an aesthetics of change can be directly drawn from conservator and theorist Hanna B. Hölling’s writings on the histories of media art.<sup>67</sup> Hölling proposes the term ‘changeability’, which she defines as ‘an

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<sup>66</sup> Roms, “Archiving Legacies,” 36.

<sup>67</sup> See also Hanna B. Hölling, *On the Afterlife of Performance* (Amsterdam: De Appel, 2010), <http://www.deappel.nl/exhibitions/e/678> (accessed May 21, 2017); *Re: Paik – On Time. Changeability and Identity in the Conservation of Nam June Paik’s Multimedia Installations* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2013); *Revisions: Zen for Film* (New York: Bard Graduate Centre and University of Chicago Press, 2015); “Archival Turn,” in *Data Drift: Archiving Media and Data Art In The 21st Century*, eds. Rasa Smite, Lev Manovich, and Raitis Smits (Riga: RIXC and Liepaja’s University Art Research Lab, 2015), 73-81; “The

artwork's potential to transform from one condition, appearance, or constitution to another.'<sup>68</sup>

While changeability is often used to describe artworks that need to be (re)performed or (re)installed every time anew in order to materialise, the term can also refer to physical changes in the appearance of artworks as the result of their museification (collection, exhibition, conservation). Such physical changes include, for example, the replacement of obsolescent media components or the collection and presentation of works as relics or document. Hölling's definition of changeability, like Bedford's term 'viral ontology', expands the understanding of the material identity of performance art as connected with the work's historical production to include its proliferation through a variety of media. This idea is also supported by other scholars, including Barbara Clausen, who describe performance as an 'interdependent relationship between event, medialisation, and reception,'<sup>69</sup> and Corina MacDonald, who talks about performance as a 'constructed phenomenon situated within networks of secondary documentation.'<sup>70</sup> The increasingly popular understanding of performance as a never-ending process of iterations, alterations and interventions across a range of fields shifts – as Gabriella Giannachi argues – 'the attention from the live event to its mediation and transmission.'<sup>71</sup> In doing so, this connects discussions about the nature of performance directly with what I will propose in the following as an approach to the practice of curating as 'remediation'.

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Aesthetics of Change: On the Relative Durations of The Impermanent," in *Authenticity in Transition: Changing Practices in Contemporary Art Making and Conservation*, eds. Emma Hermens and Frances Robertson, F. (London: Archetype Publications, 2015), 13-24; and Paik's *Virtual Archive: Time, Change, and Materiality in Media Art* (University of California Press, 2017).

<sup>68</sup>Hölling, *Paik's Virtual Archive*, 76.

<sup>69</sup>Clausen, Barbara, Philip Auslander, and Babette Mangolte, eds. *After the Act: The (Re)Presentation of Performance Art* (Wien: MUMOK: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, 2007), 35.

<sup>70</sup> Corina MacDonald, "Scoring the Work: Documenting Practice and Performance in Variable Media Art," *Leonardo* 42, no.1. (February 2009): 59.

<sup>71</sup> Gabriella Giannachi, "Performance at Tate: The Scholarly and Museological Context," *Tate.org.uk* (blog), 19 December 2014, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/performance-at-tate-scholarly-museological-context> (accessed 21 April 2016).

### 2.3. Performance, Curating and the Museum

Given the perception of performance art as that which ‘becomes itself through disappearance,’<sup>72</sup> which is ‘uncollectable’<sup>73</sup> and ‘at odds with well-established systems and processes of managing art as a material object,’<sup>74</sup> museums have often exhibited performance art through its tangible remains (documentation and relics) as ‘evidence’ or ‘surrogates’ of events to construct a history of performance art in collections. A prime example of this approach is *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (Museum of Contemporary Art, MOCA, Los Angeles, 1998), the first large-scale historical survey show of post-war performance art, which aimed to ‘examine the genesis and evolution of actions or performances that resulted in the creation of works of art.’<sup>75</sup> Curated by MOCA’s Chief Curator Paul Schimmel, this exhibition followed the traditions of modernist art-historical exhibitions, such as for example Alfred Barr’s 1935 *Cubism and Abstract Art* (MoMA), which present artworks in chronological order to evidence a stylistic development between artistic practices and genres. Starting with Jackson Pollock as an ‘emblematic, originary figure,’<sup>76</sup> Schimmel’s exhibition streamlined the genealogy of performance art into a linear development as emerging from post-war fine art practice. Notwithstanding the inclusion of both ‘authentic’ relics from the 1960s and relics ‘reconstructed’ specifically for the exhibition — such as fragments of a piano that represented Raphael Montañez Ortiz’s *Piano*

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<sup>72</sup> Phelan, *Unmarked*, 146.

<sup>73</sup> “Collecting the Performative, A research network examining emerging practice for collecting and conserving performance-based art” (April 2012 - January 2014), *Tate.org*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/collecting-performance> (accessed 12 March 2015).

<sup>74</sup> Laurenson, and van Saaze, “Collecting Performance-Based Art,” 27.

<sup>75</sup> “Out of Actions,” *Moca.org*, [http://www.moca.org/museum/exhibitioninfo\\_printable.php?useGallery=1&id=124](http://www.moca.org/museum/exhibitioninfo_printable.php?useGallery=1&id=124) (accessed 7 April 2014).

<sup>76</sup> Guy Brett, “From Collaboration to Collectivity,” in *& labels, 2. (Under Consideration)*, ed. Sophia Hao (Dundee: University of Dundee, 2011), 8.



*Destruction* event at the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium – Schimmel’s exhibition suggests the primacy of the physical object over the live encounter and the conceptual artistic processes in performance art. Although such materialist approach to post-object practices (such as performance art) has been increasingly critiqued over the past ten years, especially by authors engaged with curating (new) media art,<sup>77</sup> it is still often museums’ preferred way to present the histories of performance art. Examples include *100 Years: A History of Performance Art* (2009, touring from MoMA, New York, curated by Klaus Biesenbach and RoseLee Goldberg), and *Damage Control: Art and Destruction Since 1950* (2013-2014, touring from Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, and curated by Kerry Brougner and Russell Ferguson). *100 Years* aimed to trace the development of twentieth century performance art as a ‘living exhibition’<sup>78</sup> where visitors were invited to add their own documentation to the initial display of photographic, film and audio materials (presented on a timeline). *Damage Control*<sup>79</sup> explored some examples of performance art within a collection-based exhibition of artworks engaging with the theme of destruction in contemporary art. In both cases historical performance was presented through documentation, with live events added to accompany the display. *100 Years* culminated in Performa 09 Biennial exposing works from younger artists, while in *Damage Control* the ‘original’ artists were invited to perform re-enactments and participate in discursive events.

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<sup>77</sup> See for example Joasia Krysa ed., *Curating Immateriality: The Work of the Curator in the Age of Network Systems*, DATA Browser 03, (New York: Autonomedia, 2006); Sarah Cook, and Beryl Graham eds., *Rethinking Curating* (Cambridge, Mass., - London: The MIT Press, 2010).

<sup>78</sup> Roselee Goldberg, “100 Years: A History of Performance Art,” *Moma.org* (blog), 5 April, 2010. [https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2010/04/05/100-years-a-history-of-performance-art/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/04/05/100-years-a-history-of-performance-art/) (accessed 3 May 2017).

<sup>79</sup> Documentation of the exhibition is available in “Damage Control,” *Hirshhorn.si.edu*, <https://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/damage-control/> (accessed 13 April 2017).

Alongside the perseverance of museums' focus on object-relics and documentary material, since the early 2000s the histories of performance art have also been exhibited through re-enactments, with or without archival displays on the side. This shift from a documentary to a performative approach in museum practice has been linked to what Dorothea von Hantelmann has termed the 'the experiential turn'<sup>80</sup> in contemporary art, and what Claire Bishop sees as the result of the emergence of the 'experience economy.'<sup>81</sup> While Bishop's point relates to the growing 'consensus [in museums] that the best means of understanding historic works of ephemeral art is through direct experience,'<sup>82</sup> Hantelmann's term relates to a wider 'methodological shift in how we look at *any* artwork and in the way in which it produces meaning.'<sup>83</sup> For Hantelmann the experiential turn is a manifestation of a performative shift in contemporary art from looking at what an artwork "says" to what it "does",<sup>84</sup> in other words not what an artwork is but how it performs in the world.

Alongside documentary exhibitions of performance relics and physical archival material, live re-enactments have become an increasingly dominant trend of presenting historical performance art, for which the 2012 anthology *Perform, Repeat, Record* provides

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<sup>80</sup> Dorothea von Hantelmann, "The Experiential Turn," in *On Performativity (Living Collections Catalogue 1)*, ed. Ele Carpenter (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2014), <http://walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/experiential-turn/> (accessed 1 March 2015).

<sup>81</sup> The term 'experience economy' was introduced in Joseph Pine, and James Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999). Claire Bishop discusses the influence of experience economy on contemporary art in "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110, (Fall 2004): 51-79.

<sup>82</sup> Claire Bishop quoted in Linda Boersma and Patrick van Rossum eds. "Editorial," *Stedelijk Studies 2 (Rewriting or Reaffirming the Canon? Critical Readings of Exhibition History)* (Spring 2015): n.p. (note 10), <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/rewriting-or-reaffirming-the-canon-critical-readings-of-exhibition-history/> (accessed 1 September 2016).

<sup>83</sup> Hantelmann, "The Experiential Turn," n.p.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

an overview.<sup>85</sup> This anthology is an important source with which to analyse the dissemination of historical performance as part of both artistic and curatorial practice. Other scholarly engagements with re-enactments include Hal Foster's essay 'An Archival Impulse,'<sup>86</sup> in which the art historian discusses re-enactment as 'archival art', within which the prefix 're-' refers to some kind of repetition of an original performance; and *Performing Remains*,<sup>87</sup> in which Rebecca Schneider defines 're-enactment' as "a practice of re-playing or re-doing a precedent of an event, artwork, or act", which 'has become the popular and practice-based wing of what has been called the twentieth-century academic "memory-industry"'.<sup>88</sup> 'Re-' prefixes, however, can refer to different human desires: some point towards the re-production of an original experience while others long for gaining new experience, as discussed in Guy Brett's essay, 'The Re-factor,'<sup>89</sup> which surveys such prefixed terms and their use in recent artistic and curatorial practice.

One early example in the UK for approaching performance art through re-enactments is the event series, *A Short History of Performance Art Part I-IV*, curated by Iwona Blazwick and Andrea Tarsia in the Whitechapel Gallery, London, between 2002 and 2006. The series combined 'direct re-enactment of actions by the original artists' with 'performance lectures' and 'reactivating performance scores.'<sup>90</sup> In a 2010 essay Andrea Tarsia noted that their aim

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<sup>85</sup> Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*. Although the anthology is broadly inclusive, Jennie Klein's 2013 review of it points out some blind spots, such as the recognition of the relationship between the practice of re-enactment and avant-garde theatre, despite that re-enactments are 'inherently theatrical', see Jennie Klein, "Re Re Re: The Originality of Performance and Other (Post) Modernist Myths", *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 104 (2013): 108-116.

<sup>86</sup> Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110, (Fall 2004): 3-22.

<sup>87</sup> Schneider, *Performing Remains*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>89</sup> Guy Brett, "The Re-factor," in *Notes on a Return*, eds. Sophia Yadong Hao, and Matthew Hearn (Newcastle: Laing Gallery, 2010), 25-31.

<sup>90</sup> See description in Judit Bodor, and Roddy Hunter, "Art, Meeting and Encounter: The Art of Action in Great Britain," in *Histories and Practices of Live Art*, eds. Dee Heddon, and Jennie Klein (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 84.

with commissioning the re-enactments was to address ‘the gap between history and mythology’ and as such to upset ‘the system of art history,’ leaving ‘a generative space (...) for engagement.’<sup>91</sup> More recent and much discussed examples of re-enactments include *Seven Easy Pieces* by Marina Abramović at the Guggenheim Museum (New York) in 2005,<sup>92</sup> in which the artist proposed her re-enactment of ‘classic’ performance art pieces as a form of ‘embodied documentation,’<sup>93</sup> in effect restaging the historical works’ iconic photo images.

Despite exhibiting performance as ‘live art’ now being a common practice, museums might be still critiqued for objectifying performance by keeping a distance between spectator and artwork as in displays of art objects. An example of this is Marina Abramović’s revealingly titled *The Artist is Present* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art New York (2010),<sup>94</sup> which presented performance relics alongside re-enactments. The exhibition also included a new durational piece by Abramović, in which she sat motionless across a table from spectators taking it in turns to face her during the entire opening hours of the 79-day exhibition. Although asserting the ‘authenticity’ of the artist’s live ‘presence’ over the documentary display of historical works, the exhibition retreated to the idea of the Museum as a space for distanced looking by ‘protecting’ the artist’s performance space with rope barriers. It seems then that a simple replacement of documentary material with the artist’s live presence doesn’t necessarily ‘solve’ the issue of how to keep the integrity of performance-based artworks as experiential and interactive in the process of adapting them to

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<sup>91</sup> Andrea Tarsia, “Towards a Short History of Performance,” in Hao and Hearn, *NOTES on a return*, 42.

<sup>92</sup> Documentation of performance has been published in Nancy Spector, Erika Fischer-Lichte and Sandra Umathum, *Seven Easy Pieces* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2007).

<sup>93</sup> Jessica Santone, “Marina Abramovic’s Seven Easy Pieces: Critical Documentation Strategies for Preserving Art’s History,” *Leonardo* 41, no. 2 (2008): 147-157.

<sup>94</sup> Exhibition documentation is available on MoMA’s website. See “Marina Abramovic. The Artist is Present,” *Moma.org*, [https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010) (accessed 3 May 2016).

the conditions of the Museum.

Apart from documentary exhibitions and re-enactments there are exhibitions of performance art that present archival documents from historical events as contextual information, alongside re-interpretations. An example for this was the touring retrospective of *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life* (2007-2008), for which curators Stephanie Rosenthal and Eva Meyer-Hermann worked together with the artist to develop the curatorial concept.<sup>95</sup> The exhibition's catalogue<sup>96</sup> is a rare publication that directly addresses the challenges of curating its subject. In it, the curators describe their approach to presenting Kaprow's historical performance art through the 'reinventions' of his scores alongside a documentary display of the material archive to accommodate the artist's wish for 'a state of confusion, a situation in which everything is still completely open for as long as possible.'<sup>97</sup> The curators' approach to the exhibition shows a clear awareness of both Kaprow's way of thinking and of the authorship and authenticity of artworks as commonly understood in museum context. It is apparent from the physical layout that whilst reinvention or remediation is encouraged, there remains a clear division between what is considered as 'original' and what as a non-authorised copy. While one half of *Art as Life*, which the curators called 'Museum as mediation,' was a travelling documentary display of the material archive, the other half, 'Agency for Action,' invited visitors at each venue (München, Eindhoven, Bern, Genova) to reinvent Kaprow's scores. The documentation of reinventions was then uploaded on the project's website.<sup>98</sup> The curators also distributed Kaprow's event scores widely in print and

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<sup>95</sup> The exhibition was jointly organised by Haus der Kunst, München, Vanabbemuseum, Eindhoven, Kunsthalle, Bern, and Museon di Arte Contemporanea di Villa Croce, Genova. It travelled between 18 October 2006 and 10 February 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Eva Meyer-Hermann, Andrew Perchuk, and Stephanie Rosenthal eds. *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008).

<sup>97</sup> Kaprow cited in Stephanie Rosenthal, "Agency for Action," in Meyer-Hermann, E. et. al. eds, *Allan Kaprow: Art as Life*, 58.

<sup>98</sup> *Karow.org*, <http://www.kaprow.org/> (accessed 12 March 2015).

on the website so anybody interested in the works of Kaprow could reinvent performances in their chosen time and space. The multi-sited and multi-layered exhibition was later noted by Reesa Greenberg as an effective mode of distinguishing between the historical past and the present while at the same time providing a way ‘to construct a living legacy.’<sup>99</sup>

Finally, a fourth approach to the histories of performance art are exhibitions where performativity as a mode of curatorial practice and performance art as the subject of the exhibition merge. Examples for this are *NOTES on a Return* (2009, Laing Gallery, Newcastle curated by Sophia Hao), and *Moments. The History of Performance Art in 10 Acts* (2012, ZKM, Museum for Contemporary Art, Karlsruhe, curated by Boris Charmatz, Sigrid Gareis and Georg Schöllhammer). *NOTES on a Return* re-presented a series of performances that had taken place in Newcastle’s Laing Gallery in the 1980s (including the works of Mona Hatoum, Anne Bean, Rose English, Bruce MacLean and Nigel Rolfe) with the aim to sidestep ‘the production of both the archival and an art history predicated on hierarchical canons.’<sup>100</sup> Starting from Andreas Huyssen’s definition of memory as a ‘temporal framework for the formulation of identity in the postmodern age,’<sup>101</sup> the curator in this case approached historical performances from a contemporary curatorial perspective that regards art production as a dialogic and discursive process. Instead of exhibiting archival material as documentary evidence and contextual material (such as *Out of Actions* or *Art as Life* had done) or commissioning the ‘original’ artists to ‘re-enact’ their own performances (such as it happened *A Short History of Performance Art*, or Marina Abramovic’s *Seven Easy Pieces*), Hao invited artists from a younger generation (including Sam Belifante, Sophia Greff, Mike

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<sup>99</sup> Reesa Greenberg, “Remembering Exhibitions: From Point to Line to Web,” *Tate Papers* 12 (2009): 8, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7264> (accessed 7 April 2015).

<sup>100</sup> Sophia Yadong Hao, “Curator’s NOTES,” in Hao and Hearn, *NOTES on a Return*, 15.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Collier, Meg Mosley and Viola Yeşiltaç) to study the archive of the historical performance events and translate them for contemporary spectators as filtered through their own practice. The focus of the re-performances was therefore not on historical accuracy but on a reconsideration of these works' viability in the context of their archival exhibition. Some of the new performances hardly resembled the 1980s events: for example, Sophia Greff's response to Nigel Rolfe's 1986 piece *The Rope*, in which Rolfe had wrapped sisal twine around his head until it almost suffocated him, took the feeling of suffocation as the essence of the work, which Greff then re-enacted by crawling backwards through the gallery space while her clothes slowly wrapped themselves around her neck. Hao's curatorial project also included a series of public talks with the original artists to record their memories, and the presentation of the correspondence between curators and artists relating both to the events as conceived historically and to their present 'reinvention.' The documents were gathered and the project was annotated in a publication.<sup>102</sup>

The second example, *Moments. The History of Performance in 10 Acts* at ZKM, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe (2012), was described as a 'live exhibition' and an 'exhibition in progress' as a new approach for the 'museal presentation of live acts.'<sup>103</sup> *Moments* was a 'live' exhibition not only for its inclusion of performances but also for the exhibition's temporally structured nature. While traditionally exhibitions are installed before visitors can have access to the gallery space, *Moments* opened as an empty gallery space and unfolded over eight weeks with participants (invited artists and visitors) generating the material on display. Focusing on the historical works of female artists whose practice crossed performance, visual arts and dance, the exhibition included a multiplicity of

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<sup>102</sup> Hao and Hearn, *NOTES on a Return*.

<sup>103</sup> "Moments. The History of Performance in 10 Acts," *ZKM.de*, [http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$7853](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$7853) (accessed 12 April, 2016).

activities and open situations aiming to provide insight into the construction of an exhibition of historical performances. The production process was divided into four phases: In 'Phase 1: Act – Stage and Display,' artists Marina Abramović, Graciela Carnevale, Simone Forti, Anna Halprin, Reinhild Hoffmann, Channa Horwitz, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Sanja Iveković, Adrian Piper, and Yvonne Rainer were invited to arrange the material archive of their works from the 1960s and 1970s in front of a live audience. In 'Phase 2: Re-Act – Interpretative Acquisition in the Art Laboratory,' a group of academics and students attempted to 're-work' the historical performances from the partial documentary archival display in the context of an 'on-site laboratory' and, again in the presence of the audience. In 'Phase 3: Post-Production – Film Editing,' an artist was making a film about the laboratory, then developed it in the gallery space and exhibited it for a week. Finally, 'Phase 4: Remembering the Act – Performative Mediation of the Exhibition Process by Artistic Witnesses' included a group of students observing the entire exhibition continuously documenting their thoughts and interpretation. The exhibition presented historical artworks without an attempt at their reconstruction, but in a way that emphasised the characteristics of performance art as a durational event and encounter-oriented situation. It made it clear for the visitors that performance cannot be observed as an art object, and that the appearance of these works is subject to ongoing transformation. The visitors found themselves surrounded by a constantly changing environment and needed to shift their behaviour between observer and participant, just like witnesses of any performance. The exhibition, as durational event, could not be experienced in its totality but only as fragments of things (bodies, processes, documents, objects).

Both *NOTES on a Return* and *Moments* used the exhibition as a situation for knowledge production about the histories of specific artworks and treated their archival



materiality as a starting point for creative reinterpretation. As such, they both presented a view that the artwork in performance art has a wider materiality than the historical event including archival material accumulated over time from these works' proliferation. The curatorial approach embedded in these exhibitions addresses the here and now of the performance; in other words, how these works can be presented and accessed in the present. As such, they are different from the documentary exhibitions in museums that aim to protect the here and now of the historical event – that is, as they were presented in the past – by exhibiting archival material as the unique 'evidence' of an 'original' (and disappeared) event. Both *Notes on a Return* and *Moments* enforce an understanding of performance art as an 'extended trace history,'<sup>104</sup> enacted through continuous archival acts of interpreting the archive by artists, curators, writers, and participants.

The appearance of re-enactments in exhibitions is just one manifestation of the growing interest in performativity in contemporary curatorial thinking and practice. Others include the emergence of the discourses on 'New Institutionalism'<sup>105</sup> and 'the curatorial'<sup>106</sup> since the early 2000s. New Institutionalism – a term adopted by the field of curating from social sciences – refers to institutional curatorial practices that aim to replace the idea of the

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<sup>104</sup> Bedford, "The Viral Ontology of Performance."

<sup>105</sup> See for example Jonas Ekeberg, *New Institutionalism* (Oslo: Office for Contemporary Art Norway, 2003); Nina Möntmann, "The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism: Perspectives on a Possible Future," 2007, n.p. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0407/moentmann/en/print> (accessed 13 January 2014); Claire Doherty, "The institution is dead! Long live the institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," *ENGAGE (Art of Encounter)* 15 (Summer 2004): 1-9; Simon Sheikh, "Burning from the Inside. New Institutionalism Revisited," in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, eds. Bismarck et.al., 361–372; and Lucie Kolb, and Gabriel Flückiger, "New Institutionalism Revisited," *On-Curating* 21 (*New)Institution(alism)*, (December 2013): 3-5.

<sup>106</sup> See for example Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, eds. Judith Rugg, and Marianne Sedgewick (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 13-28; Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: MIT Press, 2012); Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Constellation and the Paracuratorial Paradox," *The Exhibitionist* 6 (2012): 55-60; Beatrice von Bismarck et.al. eds., *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 2012; Maria Lind, "The Curatorial," *Artforum* 103 (October 2009): 65-103; Maria Lind ed., *Performing the Curatorial Within and Beyond Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012); and Jean-Paul Martinon ed. *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

gallery as ‘the white cube’<sup>107</sup> that is ‘conceived as a place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks.’<sup>108</sup> While the white cube model suggested a spectatorial relationship between the spectator and art objects, curators associated with New Institutionalism – such as Charles Esche, Maria Lind, Ute Meta Bauer, Nina Möntmann – emphasise the embodied and social experience of art production by aiming to internalise the artistic post-avant-garde’s critique of institutions in the 1960s and 1970s<sup>109</sup> on the one hand and the ‘open-ended, interactive’ aesthetics of 1990s artistic practice<sup>110</sup> on the other.

Exhibitions of New Institutionalism are described by its curators as ‘laboratories,’<sup>111</sup> ‘situations,’<sup>112</sup> or ‘part community center, part laboratory, and part academy.’<sup>113</sup> They often do not even include art objects but produce art through events in which artists, curators and audiences are all active participants. According to Claire Doherty, the discourse of New Institutionalism ‘is best exemplified by three European projects: *Institution 2*, an exhibition and seminar at KIASMA in Helsinki, organised by curator Jens Hoffman (notably now Director of Exhibitions at the ICA, London); *Curating with Light Luggage*, a symposium at the Kunstverein, München, led by Director Maria Lind;<sup>114</sup> and *Verksted # 1*, a publication by

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<sup>107</sup> Brian O’Doherty, *Inside The White Cube: The Ideology of The Gallery Space*, expanded Edition (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>108</sup> Simon Sheikh, “Positively White Cube Revisited”, *e-flux 3* (February 2009): n.p., [http://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68545/positively-white-cube-revisited/#\\_edn1](http://www.e-flux.com/journal/03/68545/positively-white-cube-revisited/#_edn1) (accessed 13 January 2017).

<sup>109</sup> Jens Hoffmann, “A Plea for Exhibitions,” *MOUSSE Magazine 24*, (2010): n.p., <http://moussemagazine.it/jens-hoffmann-plea-for-exhibitions-2010/> (accessed April 15, 2014).

<sup>110</sup> Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics,” 52.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Claire Doherty, “New institutionalism and the exhibition as situation,” in *Protections: This is not an Exhibition*, eds. Adam Budak, and Peter Pakesch (Graz: Kunsthaus, 2006), 172-8.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Esche cited in Ekeberg, *New Institutionalism*, 78.

<sup>114</sup> *Curating with Light Luggage*, (25-26 October 2003) accompanied the exhibition *Telling History: An Archive and Three Case Studies* (11 October – 23 November 2003, Kunstverein, München).

The Office for Contemporary Art, Norway.’<sup>115</sup> Other examples for curatorial approaches that I would argue resemble ideas of New Institutionalism include those examples of ‘remembering exhibitions’<sup>116</sup> that are staged to allow the critical re-examination of institutional approach to mediating histories. An example for this is *Telling History: An Archive and Three Case Studies* (2003, Kunstverein München, curated by Mara Lind, Søren Grammel and Katharina Schlieben) in which artist Liam Gillick was invited by the institution to reorganise its archives to allow the institution to reflect upon its past approaches to mediating histories. Curator Søren Grammel then held three events within the archival environment in the first week of the exhibition where he discussed past exhibitions with contemporary witnesses. The quickly edited recordings of these ‘talk shows’<sup>117</sup> were re-introduced into the archival exhibition as part of the display. With this approach, the exhibition was turned from the site of static display into a site of live production of archival material with multiple voices of witnesses present as the authors of interpretation.

Another tendency in curating that connects with the issue of performativity has been reflected on in the discourse on ‘the curatorial.’ In some respects, the curatorial overlaps with the aims of New Institutionalism because many curators are linked to both discourses, but it goes beyond institutional practice to rethink curating. The curatorial aims to ‘recode’ the

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<sup>115</sup> Doherty, “The Institution is Dead,” 1.

<sup>116</sup> For discussion about different examples of remembering exhibitions see Reesa Greenberg, “Remembering Exhibitions”; “Archival Remembering Exhibitions,” *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 1, no. 2 (2012): 166; and Linda Boersma, and Patrick van Rossem, “Editorial,” in *Stedelijk Studies 2 (Rewriting or Reaffirming the Canon? Critical Readings of Exhibition History)* (Spring 2015), <http://www.stedelijkstudies.com/journal/rewriting-or-reaffirming-the-canon-critical-readings-of-exhibition-history/> (accessed 12 May 2015).

<sup>117</sup> The three talks related to three historical exhibitions, including *Transform the world! Poetry has to be Written by Anyone* (1970), *Dove sta memoria* by Gerhard Merz (1984) and *A Society of Taste* by Andrea Fraser (1993). See Søren Grammel, “Telling Histories: drei Talkshows, Kunstverein München 2003,” *YouTube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWqSvYA1Gp6RIhG70fHwQKmiBZ9GZfkNI> (accessed July 26, 2017).

notion of curating as a 'technical modality of making art go public,'<sup>118</sup> and proposes it instead as a collaborative and performative mode of knowledge production and as a 'discourse' around mediation.<sup>119</sup> The curatorial has been discussed extensively in the past ten years and there have been a variety of definitions. The publication *Cultures of The Curatorial*, for example, describes it as 'a whole field of knowledge relating to the conditions and relations of the appearance of art and culture' as well as 'a field of overlapping and intertwining activities, tasks, and roles that were formerly divided and more clearly attributed to different professions, institutions, and disciplines.'<sup>120</sup> The press release of the conference *Cultures of The Curatorial* (Academy of Visual arts, Leipzig, 22-24 January 2010) describes it as 'a practice which goes decisively beyond the making of exhibitions within a transdisciplinary and transcultural context and exploring it as a genuine method of generating, mediating and reflecting experience and knowledge' that is 'not dissimilar to the functions of the concepts of the filmic or the literary.'<sup>121</sup> Other curators give similarly metaphoric definitions. Irit Rogoff explains it through Derrida's notion of the 'send-off' and as an 'ongoing process'<sup>122</sup> where 'one begins to open up a whole set of questions, one sends them off to the world, and you don't then envision in advance either their conclusion or their final product.'<sup>123</sup> Maria Lind calls it a 'viral presence' that exists 'to create friction and push new ideas [...] within and beyond contemporary art.'<sup>124</sup> And Beatrice von Bismarck talks about it as a

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<sup>118</sup> Lind, "Performing the Curatorial," 11.

<sup>119</sup> O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating*, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Bismarck et. al. eds., *Cultures of The Curatorial*, n.p. (back cover).

<sup>121</sup> "Cultures of The Curatorial," University of Leipzig, *kdk-leipzig.de*, <http://www.kdk-leipzig.de/veranstaltungen.html> (accessed 15 April 2015).

<sup>122</sup> Irit Rogoff, and Beatrice von Bismarck, "A Conversation between Irit Rogoff and Beatrice von Bismarck," in Bismarck et. al. eds., *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 27.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>124</sup> Lind, *Performing the Curatorial*, 20.

‘constellational activity’ that makes the conditions within which art operates explicit.<sup>125</sup>

In their aim to replace museum exhibition’s primary function of ‘writing art history,’<sup>126</sup> New Institutionalism and the curatorial move away from the idea of exhibition as ‘display,’ the curator as interpreter of objects, and curating as the everyday practice of exhibition production toward developing curating in a direction that is more adequate to the mediation of contemporary (and often post-object) art. However, on closer inspection their effectiveness in achieving these aims can be critiqued from different perspectives.<sup>127</sup> For example, the term of ‘the curatorial’ is distinguished from curating by defining it as focusing on the exhibition less as an end product than a site for production. However, to develop as a discourse, the curatorial depends on curating as the ‘technical modality’ of making things go public, as it is that which makes ‘explicit the conditions within which it [the curatorial] operates,’<sup>128</sup> as Bismarck has suggested. A potential issue specifically with the effectiveness of New Institutionalism – as Simon Sheikh points out<sup>129</sup> – is that the ‘institutionalised critique’ of art institutions (starting from late 1980s onward and conceptualized under New Institutionalism) is not comparable to the ‘institutional critique’ of post-avant-garde artistic practice in the 1960s, despite their methods sounding similar as ‘being the critique and the object the institution.’<sup>130</sup> What Sheikh refers to here is that, while artists in the 1960s attacked art institutions (particularly museums) aesthetically, politically and theoretically from the outside, curators in the 1990s were critiquing their own practice from inside institutions (often being directors) and used artists as ‘the subject performing the critique.’<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Bismarck et. al. eds., *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 29.

<sup>126</sup> Ute Meta Bauer cited in Barnaby Drabble, *Stop Making Sense: The Ends of Curating and the Beginnings of the Exhibition* (PhD Dissertation., Edinburgh College of Art), 26.

<sup>127</sup> See for example Möntmann, “The Rise and Fall of New Institutionalism”; and Kolb and Flückiger, “New Institutionalism Revisited.”

<sup>128</sup> Rogoff and Bismarck, “A Conversation,” 27.

<sup>129</sup> Sheikh, “Burning from the Inside,” 368.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

He argues that while these curators might share the concerns of artists about institutions capacity to deal with contemporary art practices, and aim to act upon it by new (discursive and collaborative) approaches to mediation, the effectiveness of these interventions is always limited by their relationship to the institutions as employees, and having to conform to the political agenda of the sponsors who pay for these programmes in the first place.

Whilst ‘the curatorial’ opens, at least in theory, productive avenues for mediating art and intervening with conventions of exhibition production especially in institutional contexts, it poses risk for curators following only their own agenda and deducting agency from others implicated in the exhibition (such as the artist) and from that which is being curated (the artwork). A point of critique that curator Jens Hoffmann raised in this respect is that curators engaging with the curatorial discourse are neither interested in artists and their artworks or exhibition-making, but that of developing a discourse in and for itself. This, as Hoffmann argues, is a symptom of curators being ‘infused with political consciousness and intellectual curiosity, to connect with the broader social and political issues of our times, which inform, and perhaps surpass in importance, artistic practices.’<sup>132</sup> A further issue is that while the curatorial enables curators to take up a new, active, critical and creative role in the production and mediation of art, it can, according to artist Anton Vidokle, lead to a ‘reinforcement of authorial claims that render artists and artworks merely actors and props for illustrating curatorial concepts. Movement in such a direction runs a serious risk of diminishing the space of art by undermining the agency of its producers: artists.’<sup>133</sup> Vidokle’s insistence of the artist being the only creative agency of art production clearly manifests the gap between the aim of the curatorial as a mode of creative and collaborative mode of knowledge production in art,

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<sup>132</sup> Hoffmann, “A Plea for Exhibitions,” n. p.

<sup>133</sup> Anton Vidokle, “Art Without Artists?,” in Bismarck et. al., *Cultures of the Curatorial*, 218.

and the power relations that exists within the culture industry. A third problem with the curatorial – that Claire Doherty points out – is that the attempt to recode curating as a performative and discursive process can lead ‘to yet more coded patterns of behaviour for visitors.’<sup>134</sup> Doherty’s argument is that by turning the gallery space from ‘showroom’ to ‘social space’, the curatorial does not necessarily provide ‘liberating points of access’ to artworks for the spectator but instead creates a new set of conventions for her to follow; while before the spectator’s pre-determined role was to look and observe, now it is to act and participate.<sup>135</sup>

While New Institutionalism and the curatorial engage with performance and performativity as a mode of curatorial practice, museums engage with the issue of performance as an unruly subject of collections and thus with the practices of curators and conservators in dealing with performance. A practical framework that is based on the consideration of performance art as both changeable and multiple, particularly in museological contexts, is the Variable Media Approach. The approach was developed initially by Jon Ippolito as a creative preservation strategy for the Guggenheim’s media art collections, and later applied in other institutions.<sup>136</sup> The term ‘variable media’ is used to describe materially ‘unstable’, manifold and inherently changeable contemporary art practices (including performance art) as they enter the Museum. The Variable Media Approach suggests that data about the non-medium-specific (or behavioural) aspects of artworks can help maintain their integrity in collections even if the media that were historically used by the artist in making the work change. To help the process, a questionnaire

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<sup>134</sup> Doherty, “The Institution is Dead,” 2.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> See Alain Depocas, Jon Ippolito, and Caitlin Jones eds. *Permanence Through Change: The Variable Media Initiative* (New York – Montreal: Salomon Guggenheim Museum and Daniel Langlois Foundation, 2003), [http://www.variablemedia.net/e/preserving/html/var\\_pub\\_index.html](http://www.variablemedia.net/e/preserving/html/var_pub_index.html) (accessed 23 April 2016).

(i.e. Variable Media Questionnaire) allows artists to define the work's core characteristics as 'networked', 'duplicable', 'participatory', 'performed' etc. and to think through – with support from museum curators and conservators – how these artworks might be maintained, if at all, as part of collections through changing their medium. Depending on how open the artist is for considering the future changeability of the artwork, options including storage (protection of physical matter), emulation (imitation of the feel and look of the artwork with different means than used by the artist), migration (upgrading the work's technological elements) and even reinterpretation (reforming the 'basic aspects of the work's appearance in order to retain the original spirit') can all be considered for the preservation and – consequently – future presentation of the work.<sup>137</sup>

Further to the Variable Media Approach the Media Art Notation System (MANS) has been developed by Richard Rinehart, to provide a model through which media art can be 'scored' or 'notated' and then used as an 'aid in the re-performance or re-creation of works of art.'<sup>138</sup> Connected to ideas of 'reinterpretation' and 'notation', as potential preservation and presentation strategies for performance art, I would like to introduce the notions of 'remediation' and 'proliferative preservation'. Remediation, coined by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in the context of discussing new media art, has been described as the 'repurposing' or 'recycling of a particular subject matter taken from one medium within another medium without displaying a formal interaction between the two media.'<sup>139</sup> An

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<sup>137</sup> Jon Ippolito, "The Lost and Saved," in *Re-Collection. Art, New Media, and Social Memory*, eds. Richard Rinehart, and Jon Ippolito (Cambridge, Mass., - London, England: The MIT Press, 2014), 9-10.

<sup>138</sup> Richard Rinehart, "The Media Art Notation System: Documenting and Preserving Digital/Media Art", *Leonardo* 40 no.20. (2007): 182.

<sup>139</sup> Jay David Bolter, and Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, (Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 1999.), 45.



example of remediation given by Bolter and Grusin is the film adaptation of a novel. Remediation, reinterpretation and notation could all be considered instances of what Jon Ippolito calls ‘proliferative’ preservation, which considers creative reinterpretation as part of the material ‘genealogies’ of post-avant-garde media art.<sup>140</sup> In the histories of performance art, the reinterpretation of Fluxus scores could be discussed as key example for proliferative preservation, when an artwork survives over time as a ‘line’ of – differently authored - variations. Ippolito discusses the idea of proliferative preservation in the context of collections and bases it upon the understanding of the material conditions of time-based media (performance, installation, new media) as a line of variations over time. He argues that such understanding opens up the possibility for the continuation of materially unstable artworks of new media art within the context of exhibitions and collections. Whilst Bolter and Grusin have discussed remediation exclusively in relation to (new) media art, in this Thesis I have taken the concept of ‘remediation’ to apply it to the context of curating historical performance art. I will here propose and test ‘remediation’ (rather than reconstruction, re-enactment, revival and other reiterative strategies that are widespread in current curatorial practice) as an approach to ‘proliferative preservation’ that allows the continuation of performance art in the context of temporary exhibitions by embracing change in the artwork’s physical appearance.

The ‘behaviour-based’, rather than ‘media-specific’, approach to conservation that is embedded in the Variable Media Approach allows museums to rethink the collection and exhibition of performance-based artworks as ‘live art’. Catherine Woods, the Curator of Contemporary Art and Performance at the Tate, recalls a turning point in the UK was Tate’s

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<sup>140</sup> Jon Ippolito, “Unreliable Archivists”, in Rinehart, and Ippolito, *Re-Collection*, 181.

acquisition of Tino Seghal and Roman Ondak's performances in 2005 as a set of instructions that need to be re-performed when exhibited.<sup>141</sup> While this changed the previous conception of performance art as 'uncollectable' beyond the tangible remains, the acquisition of instructions has brought up new concerns about these artworks' future 'repeatability'<sup>142</sup> independently from the artist as part of collection-based exhibitions. Repeatability in museums is less concerned, however, with the transmission of cultural knowledge (as is the concern of performance studies), and more with the provenance of authenticity and authorship. The complexity here lies within different concepts of authenticity in the fields of visual and performing art across which performance art is ontologically situated. Denis Dutton describes this difference as 'nominal authenticity', or faithfulness to the artwork's historical material production, versus 'expressive authenticity' or 'faithfulness to the performer's own self.'<sup>143</sup> While the former depends on maintaining culturally significant objects as historically produced by the artist, the latter depends on the performer's virtuosity in maintaining the work's essence through interpretation.

As works of performance art do not exist as portable art objects that could be maintained in their original state and only come into being in the moment of their unfolding in time, the question for museums is how to maintain the 'original' artist's authorship over the re-production of these artworks without losing the integrity of the works as ephemeral or 'changeable', or going against institutional ethics of provenance. While methods of

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<sup>141</sup> Catherine Wood, "In Advance of the Broken Arm," in *Live Forever: Collecting Live Art*, ed. Teresa Calonge, (London: König Books, 2014), 125.

<sup>142</sup> Laurenson, and van Saaze, "Collecting Performance-Based Art," 33.

<sup>143</sup> Denis Dutton, "Authenticity in Art," *Denisdutton.com*, 2003, n.p., <http://www.denisdutton.com/authenticity.htm>. Originally published in *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Jerrold Levinson ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

proliferative preservation – such as remediation, reinterpretation, and notation – might provide means to preserve the integrity of the work through the performer’s sincere attempt of authentic expression, such an approach remains ‘controversial’ in the context of collections due to the loss of connection with the artwork’s original ‘authorial context.’<sup>144</sup> Given this problem with proliferative conservation artists and museums often favour a formalisation of the work upon its acquisition through the certification of the work, which details the terms and parameters of future exhibitions and repetition. An often used model for such controlled approach to the preservation of live art in collections is what Claire Bishop describes as ‘delegated performance’, in which hired performers (amateur or professional) ‘undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions.’<sup>145</sup> While delegated performance allows artists to control the distribution of their work as ‘live art’, and museums to maintain the artist’s authority without being present, preservation of performance through acquisition instructions can be problematic for museums for numerous reasons. Amongst the practical challenges are that traditionally trained curators might lack the skills associated with the production of live events. To fill these curatorial skill-gaps, museums often need to involve a ‘proxy’ artist to ‘provide aesthetic perspective’ in the absence of the artist,<sup>146</sup> which means that curators often become managers negotiating the contracts and planning ‘the rotas for performers who are “installed” in the galleries during the delegated performance.’<sup>147</sup> The maintenance of artworks as ‘live’ art is not only logistically complex but also often very expensive which can lead to the long-term invisibility for these artworks. As Catherine Wood

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<sup>144</sup> For discussion about the loss of authorial context in proliferative preservation see Rinehart, and Ippolito eds., *Re-Collection*, 181-184.

<sup>145</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and The Politics of Spectatorship*, (London-New York: Verso, 2012), 219.

<sup>146</sup> Smithsonian Institution, “Collaborations in Time-Based Art”, A Summary of Discussion Group Sessions of a Colloquium Co-organized by the Lunder Conservation Center Of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery And the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 2010, 11, *Si.edu*, [https://www.si.edu/content/tbma/documents/Time-Based-Art\\_Report.pdf](https://www.si.edu/content/tbma/documents/Time-Based-Art_Report.pdf) (accessed 12 January 2016).

<sup>147</sup> Wood, “In Advance of the Broken Arm,” 135.

explains in talking about Tino Seghal's works

[W]hilst a painting or sculpture is relatively easy to bring out of storage and put into the gallery, it is difficult in Seghal's case to produce the work each time, especially without his presence, because of the specificity and nuance of the decision-making process during the auditions, for example. (...) Slowness in putting new object on display is not unusual in a museum, but the crux of the problem here is that the "collection" is not budgeted for in event terms, and thus geared to transporting and fixing material works within its means, rather than to producing a "situation" involving hourly fees for actors, scheduling rotas and breaks and then maintaining it over months or a year. Although Seghal's work is deliberately crafted for the museum context, and his collaboration with "producers" (as a form of *repetiteur*) ensure a certain potential for the work's longevity, it is not yet clear how the work can continue to survive unless the [museum] context can further adapt to its needs.<sup>148</sup>

It seems then that the quest to find approaches to the exhibition, collection and preservation of performance art in collections environment that are sympathetic to both the artwork's material identity and the context of the Museum continues to be challenging.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the relationship between the archival, the curatorial and performance in relation to approaching histories of live art in the institutional context of the Museum. Concerns in the relationship between performance and the archive seem to reoccur, and there is a common concern with both 'immaterial economy' and 'temporality' that cuts across the fields of performance studies, contemporary curating, and new media conservation. Despite an underlying concern about whether performance art should be collected and re-presented at all given its fundamentally time-bound nature, the practical experience of the acquisition and exhibition of contemporary performance artworks since the early 2000s has led to new dialogues between artists, curators, researchers and conservators

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

about ‘the relationship between the identity of the work and the status of the elements used in a display.’<sup>149</sup> As Catherine Wood notes, the process of collecting performance art challenges museums’ traditionally object-centred operation, from the development of databases and archival systems to conservation, curation and audience engagement, thus ‘instigating a broader conceptual transition in terms of how we understand not only the idea of collecting, but the very role of the Museum.’<sup>150</sup>

From this review, it has become clear that the discourse on the histories and historiographies of performance art is a fast-growing interdisciplinary field where scholarly material is emerging all the time and perspectives shift quickly. This is evident from the turn the field has taken from thinking about performance as an aesthetics of disappearance to understanding it as an aesthetics of change, as evident in the increasing amount of writing across fields around the extended notion of the archive that has emerged in the last decade. However, despite the increasing amount of theoretical research and argument around changeability as the fundamental characteristic of time-based media (including performance art), it is also clear that museums still struggle with finding an appropriate curatorial approach that would maintain, and even encourage this changeability, due to the overriding conventions around authenticity and authorship. As the collection and presentation of historical performance art is still an emerging discourse, a lot of questions are raised in interviews, seminars and colloquia that are not yet resolved. Furthermore, although my review brought together some overlapping aspects of research in different fields of practice, the literature I found predominantly addresses the question of performance and its afterlife from one of these disciplinary perspectives, and interdisciplinary dialogues remain rare.

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<sup>149</sup> Tate, “Conservation – time-based media,” *Tate.org*, n.p., <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/our-work/conservation/time-based-media> (accessed 21 November 2015).

<sup>150</sup> Wood, “In Advance of the Broken Arm,” 125.

My review of existing curatorial approaches to the dissemination of performance histories have informed and impacted upon my work as the co-curator of *Silent Explosion*, especially in respect of thinking about how to position the exhibition within the spectrum of art historical (reconstructive, documentary) and performative (discursive, generative) exhibitions. The understanding of existing theories and approaches to exhibition practice juxtaposed with my own experience with Davies' archive and the institutional context of AC-NMW has revealed also how the actualities of an exhibition context (the institutional agenda, or financial and human resources, for example) and the collaborative process between agents of the exhibition production (i.e. artist, curators, museum staff) can limit the options that are theoretically possible. I will reflect on these limits in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDIES

### 3.1. Introduction

To develop a curatorial strategy for exhibiting Davies' 1960s performances that did not undermine the works' identity (as performed and installed events) my first point of enquiry in Chapter 2 was to review which models already exist for exhibiting historical performance art. Based on this review, I was able to identify three dominant approaches to the presentation of these works in a museum context. The first is the chronological or thematic display of performance relics (whether these are historic relics, or those derived from reconstructions) and documentation (photographs and video) as art objects; this model is often apparent in collection-based survey exhibitions and aligns with the conventions and understanding of the Museum as a place to care for and preserve cultural history through its material heritage. The second model is the exhibition of historical performance art through 'live' re-performance that shifts the attention from the objecthood of performance (relics and documents) to live presence. The third, mixed-mode model exhibits the physical relics and documents of historic events alongside, but separate from, the works' live re-performance. My review of these models demonstrated that regardless of the shift in exhibition practice from focusing on the objecthood of performance to focusing on its eventness, museum exhibitions still often regard performance art as an 'aesthetics of disappearance', where the archive exhibited whether as material accumulated over time in collections or re-enactments is considered as related or contextual material but not described as the artwork itself. In these exhibitions, the artwork often remains the historical event that has 'disappeared' and the archive only presented as documents connected with the historical production of the event as authorised by the artist).

Given the recent theories in performance and media studies around the materiality of performance art as an extended archive that is accumulated over time through practices of dissemination (see particularly Taylor, Schneider, Roms, Bedford, Hölling and Ippolito in Chapter 2), I wanted to find exhibition models through which this idea can be further investigated. When researching these exhibitions, I was particularly concerned to explore questions pertinent to my work with Davies' artworks, such as:

- How unique, repeatable, or changeable are the objects and events in performance?
- What is the relationship between the archive, the artwork, and the exhibition?
- How does the curatorial approach towards exhibiting the archive influence the spectator's aesthetic experience and understanding of the artwork?
- How does the curator's disciplinary background (as artist, as collector, as conservator/scholar) influence the curatorial approach?

In this chapter, I introduce three exhibitions that became particularly important for my research around curating Davies' works. Whilst I did not experience any of these exhibitions in person, I could conduct thorough research through documentation and correspondence with curators.<sup>151</sup> I used each exhibition to think about different aspects of exhibiting historical performance art as questions and challenges arose at different points of my project.

The first exhibition is *Partners*, curated by private collector and curator Ydessa Hendeles at Haus der Kunst, München in 2003. This exhibition was not addressing the

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<sup>151</sup> In the case of *Partners*, the exhibition was documented and discussed in detail in the exhibition's catalogue and in the curator's PhD dissertation. In the case of the Budapest *Poïpoïdrome* and *Revisions: Zen for Film* I used information from email correspondence and interviews with the curators who also provided me with documentation of their curatorial work, particularly around exhibition design plans.



histories of performance art but performativity is apparent through the ‘narrative’ display of its objects. The narrative exhibition promised a model for a non-chronological approach to presenting history from a contemporary perspective, and consideration of how Davies’ 1960s performances could be mediated in his solo retrospective without suggesting their place in the artist’s oeuvre as the result of a linear stylistic development. I also used this exhibition to explore how I could incorporate the material archive (relics and documents) of Davies’ performances in the exhibition as performative objects rather than as art objects or contextual material.

The second example is the exhibition of Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer’s *Poïpoïdrome* in 1998 by Hungarian artist György Galántai at Artpool P60, Budapest. Galántai’s approach to the presentation of the *Poïpoïdrome* is relevant to my research due to it being a multimedia, event-based and participatory artwork, a type of work that I needed to think about when exhibiting Davies’ 1960s performances, particularly his 1968 *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve*. This case study is an exploration of how such artworks continue to be present by being exhibited, reconstructed or realised by others than the ‘original’ artist. It investigates the question of what is an authentic re-presentation of a historical performance through the analysis of Galántai’s attempt to be faithful to both the work’s material identity as performance and the original state of its objecthood collected as relics by a museum.

My third case study is the exhibition of Nam June Paik’s 1962-64 *Zen for Film*, curated by conservator scholar Hanna B. Hölling in 2015 as part of her research project *Revisions: Zen for Film* at Bard Graduate Center, New York. Hölling’s ideas about changeability have influenced my thinking about the ontology of performance art as an ‘aesthetics of change,’ as already discussed in Chapter 2. This exhibition allowed the

exploration of how the changeability of an instruction-based and event-structured artwork (such as Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film*) can be demonstrated in a later exhibition through presenting what an artwork is at present 'in relation to the change it has experienced.'<sup>152</sup>

All three case studies allowed reflection on my own work with Davies' 1960s performance works in *Silent Explosion* and informed my understanding of how their histories can be mediated for the contemporary spectator. As such, they all provided some response to the curatorial challenges I faced throughout my research and that I will discuss further in Chapter 4. A key characteristic that the three case studies share with the exhibitions I have mentioned in Chapter 2 is the context of a temporary exhibition. As Georgina Guy states, temporary exhibitions allow a 'transience (...) aligned with practices of performance,'<sup>153</sup> which then allowed me to expand my view on performance not only as the subject of exhibitions, but also as a possible mode of exhibition-making practice. Within the body of temporary exhibitions, however, these case studies are very different from the models I have identified in Chapter 2. They allow further explorations of approaching performance from a variety of curatorial positions (collector, artist, conservator), approaches (narrative exhibition, reconstruction, curating-as-research) and contexts (kunsthalle, avant-garde art space, research institution). Each case study will be discussed first individually, and then compared with reference to the four questions I have identified above as my focal points of analysis.

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<sup>152</sup> Hölling, *Revisions: Zen for Film*, 24.

<sup>153</sup> Georgina Guy, *Theatre, Exhibition, and Curation, Displayed & Performed* (Routledge: New York – London, 2016), 13.

### 3.2. Case study 1: *Partners*, Haus der Kunst, München, 2003

*Partners* was curated by Canadian private art collector Ydessa Hendeles from her own collection of contemporary art objects, historic photographs and items from everyday culture. It was ‘created to offer a contemporary-art experience that interprets the past from the vantage point of the present.’<sup>154</sup> It explored twentieth-century history through a series of tableaux across fourteen rooms at the Haus der Kunst, München. Of particular interest for my research within the exhibition is the four-room installation – described by Hendeles as ‘Passage One’<sup>155</sup> – within the exhibition that is in many ways comparable with my own curatorial enquiry in terms of its subject (history through a contemporary perspective), content (a private collection), and form (an exhibition in galleries that are spatially connected in a linear fashion). This exhibition also provides a case study for exploring the role of the curator as *auteur*.

Looking at the curator’s map (Figure 1) published in the accompanying catalogue,<sup>156</sup> the exhibition was designed as three separate cul-de-sac units – that Hendeles calls ‘passages’ or ‘curatorial compositions.’<sup>157</sup> By intervening in the original architectural layout of individual galleries around a large courtyard, Hendeles directs the visitors’ journeys, requiring them to turn back at the end of each passage and revisit the display they have just seen before they can move on to see the rest of the exhibition. This curatorial design is key for the curatorial approach to create an experience of the exhibition as ‘compositions made of

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<sup>154</sup> Ydessa Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions* (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2009), [https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles\\_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf](https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf) (accessed 27 April 2015).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ydessa Hendeles et al. eds. *Partners*, (Köln: Walther König. 2003), 4.

<sup>157</sup> Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions*.

metaphors' that, as Hendeles notes,

like a tapestry, provides a picture woven with threads of themes, but is ultimately not thematic, illustrative, or didactic. *Partners* offers a contemporary-art experience to individuals where they can transcend the literal to search for new insights and reflections of themselves – particularly how their identities are formed, by virtue of their personal histories and those they inherit.<sup>158</sup>

A paradigmatic example of Hendeles' historically synchronous and metaphorical curatorial approach, is Passage One which comprises four connecting rooms near the main entrance.

The first room contains two doors; one leading to the other galleries, Passage Two and Passage Three, the other being the sole entrance and exit to Passage One. Upon choosing to enter Passage One, the spectator is left alone to 'read' the exhibition: there are no descriptive wall-labels that would provide a simple explanation. The objects on display, not all of which are artworks, are selected from different historical periods and presented without any chronological order or medium-specific categorisation that would suggest any immediate interpretation. Opposite to each other on the walls of the first room are two small photographs; Diane Arbus' *Self-portrait with camera* from 1945 shows a young woman capturing her image in the mirror with a camera, and a studio group portrait entitled *The Wild Bunch* from c.1900, showing five men holding guns. Also in the room, in a vitrine, there is a vintage, mass-produced wind-up tin-toy, *Minnie Mouse Carrying Felix in Cages*, a popular icon from Hollywood ca. 1926-36, which also provides the cover image of the exhibition's catalogue. The visual juxtaposition of these three objects introduces a series of dualities that characterises the whole passage – and indeed the whole exhibition - through which conventional power relationships may be interrogated. The five men holding guns in front of the feminine, floral background of the photography studio is facing the photograph of the single woman whose gesture with in this scenario can be read as a 'weapon' pointed at the

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<sup>158</sup> Ydessa Hendeles, "Notes on the Exhibition," in Hendeles et.al., *Partners*, 209.

five men. The ambiguity of the male - female power relationship is further enhanced by the central positioning of the small collector's item that shows the (female) mouse capturing the (male) cat.

The narrative arrangement of objects in Passage One takes a dramatic form in the environment installed across the next two galleries titled (*Partners*) *The Teddy Bear Project* (Figure 2).<sup>159</sup> In this, Hendeles, named as the author, displays three thousand family album photographs showing people in the company of teddy bears alongside vintage stuffed toy bears (all collected from eBay) in a floor-to-ceiling structure of mahogany-framed vitrines designed to fit the space. The vitrines, a key element of the installation alongside the objects, resembles a Wunderkammer (or 'curiosity cabinet'). In many way, the Wunderkammer can be considered the antecedent of the modern Museum, used from the time of the Renaissance as a mode with which to present rare and unusual collections of anthropological, archaeological or ethnographic objects, usually collected by a single person for scholarly purposes or personal entertainment. As a visual trope, the image of the Wunderkammer is an established and readable reference for the spectator of contemporary art exhibitions, used also by artists such as Mark Dion, whose *Tate Thames Dig* (1999) presented London's cultural history through artefacts dug out from the banks of the Thames. In Hendeles' Wunderkammer, the photographs are categorised as 'children', 'soldiers', 'prostitutes', 'athletes' etc. The display surrounds the spectator who needs to walk around the room and up on the painted metal staircases to the mezzanines to be able to see the individual images. Her movement is slowed down by the overwhelming number of objects presented in a 'scholarly' manner, where the value and significance of objects is made apparent through the mode and

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<sup>159</sup> Image available from Ydessa Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions* (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2009), [https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles\\_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf](https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf) (accessed 27 April 2015), p.32.

the context of the presentation. The Wunderkammer as an environment within which found objects gain status as unique and precious objects recalls also Marcel Duchamp's idea of the 'readymade', in which everyday objects chosen by artists are legitimated as art through their display in the context of the gallery/museum.

As art historian Ernst van Alphen points out in the exhibition publication, far from 'sentimentalizing the culture of the Teddy Bear', the typological curatorial approach that Hendeles introduces in the exhibition evokes a feeling of 'the uncanny,'<sup>160</sup> which Sigmund Freud defined as 'that class of terrifying' (...) that 'is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar.'<sup>161</sup> Unsettling relationships becoming apparent to the spectator through encountering the enigmatic presence of objects as they move through the passage, including the wind-up toy-mouse in the first room, a taxidermied dog positioned on the floor in front of a vitrine filled with stuffed toy bears in the second room. While the wind-up toy mouse is a collector's item of a unique example of a mass-produced object, the dog's status is that of an art object made unique by the signature of an artist. *Untitled* (1998) is a life-like representation of a cute animal that, within the specific environment created by Hendeles, becomes an evocation of unsettling feelings of violence and danger as the spectator moves around the space. Upon leaving rooms 2 and 3 filled with thousands of objects in floor-to-ceiling vitrines, the spectator steps into the last room that is almost empty, except for a small sculpture showing the figure of a boy on his knees, praying, facing away from the entrance.

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<sup>160</sup> Ernst van Alphen, "Exhibition as Narrative Work of Art," in Hendeles et. al. eds., *Partners*, 173.

<sup>161</sup> The English word 'uncanny' is the non-equivalent translation of the German word 'unheimlich', literally meaning 'unhomely.' Sigmund Freud, 'The "Uncanny",' in James Strachey ed. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume 17 (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works, (Vintage, 1999 [reprint]), 219.

This sculpture is *Him* (Figures 3, 4),<sup>162</sup> also by Maurizio Cattelan, from 2001. To see the boy the spectator must move closer, turn around and bend over, at which point her movement is interrupted by the sudden shock of realising the boy's face is the adult Adolf Hitler. The process of encountering the exhibition in reverse begins in the moment of the spectator standing above *Him*, the third enigmatic object (after the mouse and the dog) depicting the double image of innocence and violence and evoking the feeling of the uncanny. This is the end of Passage One, a point where the spectators need to turn back and move through the exhibition again towards the entrance where they can leave the display. On their way out they encounter the photographs and objects of the previous two rooms again, but this time starting from the reverse perspective of now having encountered *Him*.

Hendeles' curatorial narrative reconfigures the linear historical narrative of the past and mediates it through what Mieke Bal calls 'preposterous history', [where] 'the work performed by later images obliterates the older images as they were before the intervention.'<sup>163</sup> The tableau that Hendeles creates in the last room as the spectator turns, with *Him* in the foreground and the old photographs in the back, provides a new perspective through which the individual faces on the photos we could encounter from close up now blur from a distance and become a faceless mass (are these victims or survivors?), in front of which the boy-Hitler figure prays upwards. Furthermore, the image of the bears and the dog after seeing *Him* evoke again the uncanny, serving as double images of innocence and evil. The function of the enigmatic objects that are 'dotted' throughout the exhibition is to encourage an understanding that history is never black and white. While Hendeles does not

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<sup>162</sup> Images available from Ydessa Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions* (Ph.D. diss., University of Amsterdam, 2009), [https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles\\_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf](https://curatorialstudioseminar.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/hendeles_curatorialcomposition-unlocked.pdf) (accessed 27 April 2015), pp.42-43.

<sup>163</sup> Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1.

provide a descriptive wall-label for the display, a handout with detailed information regarding the history of the individual objects and potential reading between them is available for those spectators who want more help to read the narratives.

*Partners* takes history as the subject of an installation environment. The exhibition's design suggests a curatorial approach that is closer to narrative construction in theatre and cinema than to conventional (art historical) museum exhibitions, where art objects are organised around 'pre-established narratives,'<sup>164</sup> such as a central theme, a specific medium, a geographical place or a historic era. *Partners* is explained by Hendeles as a 'curatorial composition,'<sup>165</sup> in which perception and 'reading' is determined by the particular positioning of objects and sequencing of images created in the space, and in which narratives emerge from the spectators' encounter of objects and images in a particular order as they move around the space. In her 2012 essay 'Exhibition as Film,' Mieke Bal discusses the cinematic narrative of *Partners* as a series of 'poetic figures', such as 'contrasts' (the crowded room vs. emptiness), 'counterpoints' (juxtaposing 'innocence' with 'evil'), and 'conventions' such as a 'close-up' (spectator needs to move close to objects) or a 'long-shot' (the image of several objects at the same time across rooms).<sup>166</sup> These poetic figures and conventions are used to frame the spectator's encounter through creating moments of suspended time or by slowing down or making faster 'the forward thrust of the plot.'<sup>167</sup> From the perspective of such a cinematic reading, Hendeles' role as a curator is comparable to the scenographer (theatre) or cinematographer (film) who – although invisible herself – provides a lens that guides the

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<sup>164</sup> Alphen, "Exhibition as narrative Work of Art," 167.

<sup>165</sup> Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions*.

<sup>166</sup> Mieke Bal, "Exhibition as Film," in *Exhibition Experiments*, eds. Sharon MacDonald, and Paul Basu (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), 71-93.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



spectator's gaze through a sequence of images: the experience of Cattelan's *Him* starts with a zoom-in (move closer), followed by a close-up (bend down), suspended moment (sudden shock) and a long shot (the image of the photographs in the background). However, unlike in film or theatre, where the spectator's position is fixed while the camera moves or the stage changes, in the exhibition it is the spectator who moves through the scenes whilst her perspective is determined by the curatorial narrative.

The narrative exhibition type differs from usual museum displays where the selection of objects is made by curators 'with respect to the – often changing – hierarchies of works and artists as established in the history of art.'<sup>168</sup> Hendeles' position as collector-curator, and thus her private ownership of artworks, is more comparable to the position of the artist-curator who uses the exhibition as a medium of curatorial practice. Exhibitions curated by artists comparable to Hendeles' approach to mediating history in *Partners* include *The Uncanny* (Gemeentemuseum, Arnhem, Holland, 1993), in which artist Mike Kelley curated art objects and cultural objects to 'mirror contemporary art world problems' around technological Utopianism,<sup>169</sup> or *Germania*, an installation by artist Hans Haacke at the 45th Venice Biennial, also in 1993, which exhibited a documentary photograph of Hitler visiting the Biennial in 1934 in an empty pavilion with a demolished floor to reference Hitler's demand to redesign the German pavilion between 1934 and 1938. Hendeles herself sees her work as comparable to, but different from, the work of 1970s curator-auteurs such as Rudi Fuchs and Harald Szemann, who 'celebrated the practices of artists in their own practice-

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<sup>168</sup> Nathalie Heinrich, and Michael Pollak, "From Museum Curator to Exhibition Author," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds., Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson, and Sally Nairne (London – New York: Routledge, 1996), 233.

<sup>169</sup> Margaret Iversen, "The Uncanny," in *Papers of Surrealism*, 3 (2005), 1.  
[http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal3/acrobat\\_files/iversen\\_review.pdf](http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal3/acrobat_files/iversen_review.pdf) (accessed 19 February 2014).

based work as curators.<sup>170</sup> Hendeles' ambitions in this exhibition clearly differ from the hierarchical relationship traditionally present in museum contexts and is based on the idea of an 'egalitarian' authorship<sup>171</sup> between curator and artist that was present for example in Szemann's *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (Kunsthalle, Bern, 1969) or Fuch's Documenta 7 (Kassel, 1982).

Just like artist-curators and curator-auteurs, Hendeles as collector-curator appropriates artworks and other objects as material to create an exhibition/installation where the art historical significance or value of individual objects is secondary to their position within the environment. While Hendeles' approach as curator-author was not a model I eventually applied in *Silent Explosion*, the approach of a narrative exhibition was useful in informing how we might mediate Davies' career beyond a chronological approach.

### **3.3. Case study 2: The Budapest *Poïpoïdrome*, 1976 / 1998**

My second case study is an environment designed for active participation rather than for the simple observation of objects. Conceived in 1963 by artist Robert Filliou and urbanist Joachim Pfeufer, the *Poïpoïdrome* is a conceptual and physical space to express and engender the idea of 'permanent creation'. Permanent Creation was Filliou's response to his wife Marianne's observation that 'you're artists only when you create [and so once] you're thru' creating, you're not artists any more', which led him to think that 'Creation is not enough. One must not stop creating. One can't afford to. [...] What I must share with everyone is the

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<sup>170</sup> Hendeles, *Curatorial Compositions*, iii.

<sup>171</sup> Frank den Ouden, *Space.Time. Narrative: the exhibition as post-spectacular space* (London - New York, Routledge, 2012), 10.

knack of permanente [sic] creation.<sup>172</sup> Filliou appropriated the word ‘poïpoi’ – reportedly used as a vernacular response by the Dogons of Mali when asking each other ‘How is your cow?’ ‘And how is your field?’ ‘And how is your eldest son?’<sup>173</sup> – to signify ‘the reflective and active communication that can always be started, finished, started again, thereby giving expression to the process of Permanent Creation.’<sup>174</sup>

Unlike in traditional media (painting or sculpture, for example), where an artwork is defined by its portable objecthood in a singular medium, the material dimensions of the *Poïpoïdrome* are variable, as it was conceived by the artists to change every time it is presented. The work had several iterations in Filliou’s lifetime, ranging from small scale maquettes<sup>175</sup> to sculptural installations,<sup>176</sup> prototypes,<sup>177</sup> and finally what the artists called ‘real space-time’ versions.<sup>178</sup> Filliou and Pfeufer made all these at first in anticipation, and later in the absence, of the ‘optimum’ version, which Filliou defined in his 1970 book, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, as a 24 meters square building with a series of playfully themed rooms for interaction. Here Filliou explains the four main spaces of the *Poïpoïdrome* as: ‘THE POIPOI’, where the spectator is confronted, for example, with ‘a

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<sup>172</sup> Robert Filliou, *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> facsimile edition (Occasional Papers, 2014), 191.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Günther Berghaus, “Happenings in Europe: Trends, Events, and Leading Figures,” in *Happenings and Other Acts*, ed. Mariellen Sandford (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), 290.

<sup>175</sup> See for example *Le (ou la) Poïpoïdrome à espace-temps Réel, prototype 00 (1963-75)*, Musée d’art contemporain. Brussel, <http://ensembles.mhka.be/items/14178> (accessed 15 April 15).

<sup>176</sup> See for example *Poïpoïdrome and the Rocket* at Documenta V., 1972, reproduced in Tobia Bezzola, and Roman Kurzmeyer eds. *Harald Szemmann with by through because towards despite. Catalogue of all exhibitions 1957-2005* (Zürich - Vien - New York: Edition Voldemeer & Springer, 2007), 332.

<sup>177</sup> See for example prototype no.”00” (1975) reproduced in *Robert Filliou* (Hannover: Sprengel-Museum – Paris: Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris – Bern: Kunsthalle, 1984), 133.

<sup>178</sup> Budapest (1976, No.1), Nantes (1977, No.2.), Reykjavik (1978, No.3) and Paris (No.4). See “Robert Filliou et Joachim Pfeufer”, *Mac-lyon.com*, n.p., [http://www.mac-lyon.com/static/mac/contenu/fichiers/artistes/notices\\_collec/filliouetpfeufer.pdf](http://www.mac-lyon.com/static/mac/contenu/fichiers/artistes/notices_collec/filliouetpfeufer.pdf) and Robert Filliou, and Joachim Pfeufer (accessed 12 March 2016).

wheel 5 metres in diameter [with the inscription of] ART IS WHAT ARTISTS DO.<sup>179</sup> This is followed by a second room called ‘THE ANTIPOIPOI’, which features ‘Shakespeare on a Vespa, [...] the cheese that someone will be eating the day of the Apocalypse, the stick with which Jesus will chase the Pope from Rome, the menstrual tampon that will be worn by the first woman in space [...]. Also, rising to the ceiling is the POIPOI ROCKET.’<sup>180</sup> Following on from these is ‘THE POSTPOIPOI’, where, as Filliou explains, ‘the Poipoi spirit is applied to the individualization of several disciplines such as: - Anatomy [...] ‘The Kingdom of [sic] Arts is Within You’ [and] – Christianity Today: The New Testament is nailed on the wooden cross, which is used as a support for all the tools that went into the making of the cross.’<sup>181</sup> Finally, the fourth main room is ‘THE POIPOIDROME AS SUCH’, which he describes as ‘an arena where seats have been disposed around a gigantic egg, the Poipegg’ and where ‘the circuit ends, here the visitor meditates, absorbs, conceives.’<sup>182</sup> Filliou also notes that ‘besides these four main rooms there will be a Poipoinursery, [...] the Poipoithèque, [and] The Prepoipoi [and] a mobile version [...] quilt inside a truck [...] to roam around the world.’<sup>183</sup>

As an addition to their own attempts to realise the *Poïpoïdrome* in physical form, a 1975 publication entitled  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = \text{Filliou/Pfeuffer}$  – produced to accompany the “00” prototype of the *Poïpoïdrome* at Europalia France 75, (Palais de Beaux Arts, Brussels) – introduced the idea of the ‘wandering’ *Poïpoïdrome*, through which ‘the spirit of permanent creation can blow wherever and however it desires,’ and through which others can create

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<sup>179</sup> Filliou, *Teaching and Learning*, 193.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 193-196.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 193-196.

their own *Poïpoïdrome*, whether as an imagined space like an ‘open mind’ or a physical space, like an ‘armchair or a house.’<sup>184</sup> It was in the spirit of the ‘wandering’ *Poïpoïdrome* that, following Filliou’s death in 1987, Pfeufer alone decided to realise three more editions of the work between 1993 and 2000, the last of which was also described as a new edition of the 1975 prototype. This last version was then acquisitioned in 2010 by the Musée d’art contemporain, Lyon, into their collection, with Pfeufer’s permission and instructions for its future reinstallations.<sup>185</sup>

Somewhere, amidst the complexity of the work’s iterations in its different conceptual and physical states there is a question about production. The *Poïpoïdrome* – as object, concept and event-structured installation or environment – proposes a material plurality that indicates variability, changeability and authorial multiplicity in its exhibitions. Given that, since its conception, the work develops through a series of individually unique iterations, it would be difficult to decide which version is more ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ than the others, or when and how this work begins and ends. If that is the case, however, then what happens with this artwork when its different iterations become part of different collections? How can, or should, any version of the *Poïpoïdrome* ever be re-presented, re-constructed or re-installed when historically each manifestation is unique? To explore the complexity of these questions, I compare two iterations of one version of the *Poïpoïdrome* in Budapest, twenty-four years apart. The first is a ‘real space-time’ version realised in 1976 by Filliou and Pfeufer at the Young Artist’s Club, and the second is its reconstruction in 1998 by artist György Galántai at Artpool P60 exhibition space. Questions particularly relevant to the present research include

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<sup>184</sup> Robert Filliou. *Editions and Multiples* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2003), 8.

<sup>185</sup> *Prototype 00, édition 2000* is reproduced in “Joachim Filliou et Joachim Pfeufer,” *Mac-lyon.com*, [http://www.mac-lyon.com/static/mac/contenu/fichiers/artistes/notices\\_collec/filliouetpfeufer.pdf](http://www.mac-lyon.com/static/mac/contenu/fichiers/artistes/notices_collec/filliouetpfeufer.pdf) (accessed 15 April 2017).

how the reconstruction intervenes in the emergence of an artwork that was intended by the artist as inherently changeable? Also, how does the process of reconstruction reveal the differences or overlaps between the curatorial approach of the ‘original’ artist and the later curator? And what can we understand about the artwork (as a whole) through the reconstruction of only one of its ‘real space-time versions’?

Compared to the ‘optimum’ version, which is an environment that can be realised only through participants’ interactions with the spaces and objects, the early iterations of the work – such as small-scale maquettes, or sculptural installations – might seem too formal to remain playful. These object-like versions lack the social experience that Henri Lefebvre describes as ‘lived space,’<sup>186</sup> which combines the materialism of a ‘perceived space’ (produced through everyday spatial practices) and the idealism of a ‘conceived space’ (the imagined representation of a space) ‘without being reducible to either.’<sup>187</sup> The 1976 *Poïpoïdrome à Espace-Temps Réel No.1*. (The Real Space-Time Poïpoïdrome No. 1.) in Budapest (Figure 5) is therefore important in addressing this lack in the work’s evolution, as its presentation for the first time as ‘lived space’ integrated its otherwise virtual architecture within the social milieu of the city. This version was realised as part of the artist’s visit to Hungary at the invitation of László Beke, then director of the Young Artists' Club.<sup>188</sup> As documentation of the event shows, the physical structure of the *Poïpoïdrome* in this case comprised of wooden slats suspended vertically from the ceiling and laid horizontally on the floor, creating a three-dimensional grid structure. Through this structure, the artists

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<sup>186</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Blackwell: Oxford & Cambridge, Mass., 1991).

<sup>187</sup> Zhongyuan Zhang, “What is Lived Space?,” *Ephemer Journal* 6, no. 2 (2006): 221, <http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/6-2zhang.pdf> (accessed 17 January 2016).

<sup>188</sup> Personal conversation with László Beke, November 2016.

suspended different objects including photographs documenting daily life in Budapest at the time (Figure 6), everyday objects such as eggs and other assembled objects such as a blank *Interflug*<sup>189</sup> plane ticket attached to a piece of wood (Figure 7). This latter object is aesthetically reminiscent of ‘suspense-poems,’ the – hypothetically – infinitely extendable artworks invented by Filliou sometime between 1965 and 68 at La Cédille qui Sourit (The Smiling Cedilla), his first centre for permanent creation.<sup>190</sup> Suspense poems were ‘typically a wooden support bearing a small object and text label, its top and bottom equipped with metal hooks and eyes allowing successive verses to be suspended below.’<sup>191</sup> The formal similarity between the Budapest object and Filliou’s ‘suspense poems’ supports a reading of its function as a performative object that encourages communication and interaction. This object also connects the *Poïpoïdrome* conceptually to La Cédille qui Sourit as both places created for permanent creation.<sup>192</sup>

The photographs of everyday life are particularly useful to consider in relation to Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘perceived space’ as they document the urban reality of work and play, labour and rest, production and consumption in public spaces. Each photograph is stamped with the text ‘l’art est ce que font les artistes / art is what artists do’, suggesting that Filliou proposes the city as a space for creativity and thus its inhabitants as artists and their social practices as art. The 1976 Budapest *Poïpoïdrome* can be considered then as belonging

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<sup>189</sup> Interflug was the national airline of East Germany from 1963 to 1990.

<sup>190</sup> The *Cédille qui Sourit* (The Smiling Cedilla), as opposed to the *Poïpoïdrome*, was as a shop in Villefranche on the Cote d’Azur, that Filliou run with his Fluxus artist friend George Brecht. The Cedille sold artworks made by the two artists (and invented in the space) as well as books from MAT Editions, Something Else Press, and others. It was hardly ever open and, being commercially unsustainable, eventually had to close in 1968. See Natilee Harren, “La cédille qui ne finit pas: Robert Filliou, George Brecht, and Fluxus in Villefranche,” *Getty Research Journal*, No. 4 (2012): 127-143. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41413136>.

<sup>191</sup> Harren, “La cédille,” 130.

<sup>192</sup> The object also gains poignancy in retrospect as Cold War ephemera of East German aviation thus presenting the desire *for* and ability *to* travel between East and West Europe and vice versa and as such can be considered as a performative object.

to the post-war conceptual art practices described by art historian Anna Dezeuze as adopting ‘a bricolage model to set up open systems in which new relations between art and the everyday could be articulated.’<sup>193</sup> In the *Poïpöïdrome*, as spatialised bricolage, the artists ‘hand the *bricoleur*’s tools directly over to the spectator-participant,’<sup>194</sup> which marks an evolution of the socialisation of the work as an aesthetic space and experience as a ‘lived space’ (Figure 8).

In 1998, the 1976 Budapest real space-time version of the *Poïpöïdrome* was reconstructed by Hungarian artist György Galántai who had been present at the 1976 event, but only developed a correspondence with Filliou from 1979. In March of that year, Galántai had announced the formation of the Artpool Archive (which would become his life’s work) by circulating a poster-catalogue of his own work throughout the international mail art network, asking potential participants to ‘send me information about your activity.’<sup>195</sup> Filliou’s response to this call was a postcard depicting himself in a photograph as ‘The Father of The Eternal Network’, asking Galántai to make a poster with the following text, to be exhibited at the entrance of the Young Artist’s Club:

TELEPATHIC MUSIC no. YOUNG ARTISTS’ CLUB  
fond remembrance  
warm wishes  
handshakes  
ROBERT FILLIOU - September 1979<sup>196</sup>

The postcard now functions as a performative archival document that at once is a reminder of the 1976 event, presents a score for a new action (make a poster, write on it, hang it on the

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<sup>193</sup> Anna Dezeuze, “Assemblage, Bricolage, and the Practice of Everyday Life,” *Art Journal* 67, no.1. (2008): 33.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Galántai (Budapest: Ernst Museum, 1993), 303.

<sup>196</sup> Robert Filliou. *Telepathic Music*, 26 August, 1979. Collection of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest. <http://www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Filliou/Fillioucard.html> (accessed 15 April 2015).



wall) and performs an exchange between the two artists in 1979. Conceived in 1977 as Filliou's contribution to the *Image Bank Postcard Show*, an international project initiated by Michael Morris and Vincent Trasov 'in the hope of engendering a shared creative consciousness,'<sup>197</sup> the postcard in 1979 can be perceived as Filliou's recognition of Artpool as belonging to 'The Eternal Network.' While The Eternal Network was Filliou's conceptualisation of planetary consciousness as an interconnected network, it has been widely appropriated also to refer to the international mail art community particularly in the 1970s. Filliou's suggestion of *Telepathic Music* inspired Galántai to launch his *Artpool Periodical Space* (APS) as a combined artistic-archival-curatorial practice of his Artpool Archive project, which aligned his international correspondence activities with the spirit of permanent creation. APS became Artpool's main curatorial framework until 1991 and an early manifestation of what Galántai described in 2003 as an 'active archive'<sup>198</sup>: an institution and open artwork at once, which develops through exchange and is realised in multiple formats such as exhibitions, events, publications and the web.

In 1998, by which time it had become an internationally recognised archive and research centre of the post-avant-garde, Artpool organised *The Year of Installation* as part of a series of annual activities dedicated to the research of artistic concepts through curatorial projects. This included *The Year of Performance* (1995), *Art on The Internet* (1996) and *The Year of The Network* (1997). Artpool's research into installation art developed through an internationally circulated questionnaire and an open call to receive, archive and exhibit

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<sup>197</sup> The Image Bank is now collected as Morris/Trasov Archive at The Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, Vancouver. "morris/trasov archive," *Belkin.ubc.ca*. <http://www.belkin.ubc.ca/morris-trasov/morris-trasov-archive> (accessed 14 April 2016).

<sup>198</sup> György Galántai, "Active Archive," 2003, *Artpool.hu*, [http://www.artpool.hu/archives\\_active.html](http://www.artpool.hu/archives_active.html) (accessed 14 April 2016).

material online as well as offline at Artpool's new exhibition space, Artpool P60, in the context of an *International Installation Festival*.<sup>199</sup> This festival was the context also for the reconstruction of the 1976 *Poïpoïdrome* - an installation itself – that was Galántai's own curatorial initiative to mark the opening of the Artpool P60 exhibition space as a new centre for permanent creation. The physical remains of the 1976 participatory environment, which the artists gifted to the Young Artists' Club, were deposited by László Beke in the Fine Art Museum's Modern Collection,<sup>200</sup> but the work hadn't been re-exhibited by the museum. In an email during October 2016, Galántai revealed to me that the Budapest *Poïpoïdrome* in 1998 was 'a pile of objects in a cardboard box,'<sup>201</sup> which Artpool could easily loan from the Museum. The reconstruction was then based on photographs of the 1976 event collected by Artpool from different sources, and the research that Artpool's colleagues conducted into the history of the *Poïpoïdrome*.<sup>202</sup>

The conceptual relationship between Artpool's approach to reconstruction and Filliou's idea of permanent creation becomes clear through Galántai's exhibition design for the *International Installation Festival* (Figure 9). The drawing shows the reconstructed physical structure of the *Poïpoïdrome* embedded in the grid design of the exhibition, which was then realised in the space of Artpool P60 as a three-dimensional wire structure. The wire structure alters the architecture of the exhibition space and provides an open physical grid, which includes the *Poïpoïdrome* as well as artworks and documents received by Artpool to the open call about installations. This environment reinforces a connection between the

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<sup>199</sup> Planned between 17 March - 4 April, the exhibition at Artpool P60, Budapest lasted until 2 June 1998.

<sup>200</sup> The collection is now called 'Post 1800 Art'. Ref. no. L.8.023. Ferenc Tóth, e-mail to the author, 2 November 2016.

<sup>201</sup> Email correspondence with Artpool during October 2017.

<sup>202</sup> "The Poïpoïdrom," *Artpool.hu*, <http://www.artpool.hu/Fluxus/Filliou/> (accessed 12 January 2015).

*Poïpoïdrome* and other works sent to the exhibition evoking the sense of The Eternal Network as planetary consciousness interconnected with all aspects of 'permanent creation'. It also physically, and by extension metaphorically, integrates the *Poïpoïdrome* with all historical and contemporary manifestations of the Artpool Periodical Space (APS) since 1979.

The 1998 reconstruction merged the historical space-time of the 1976 *Poïpoïdrome* with the real space-time of Artpool P60 to create an altered space for permanent creation. Visitors to the 1976 *Poïpoïdrome* were invited to reflect on their own everyday reality as art while performing in the space through interaction with the structure and its objects. Their comments written on the photographs, and traces of paint marks on the wooden slats of the physical structure are now considered as integral parts of the work's materiality. Given the present status of this physical structure as a unique collection item, visitors to the 1998 reconstruction could enter the installation in the same way as in 1976 but could not interact with it anymore; their relationship to the work was now framed by temporal distance as witnesses of a historical artwork. The status of the *Poïpoïdrome* as a collection item that had to remain untouched forced Galántai to think about a possibility of reconstruction that would protect the material authenticity of the work's object remains, whilst also respecting its inherently participatory nature and inherent changeability. It was his understanding of the *Poïpoïdrome* as a concept that enabled him to reconceive it within an exhibition design that was materially, conceptually and socially connected to his own contemporary networked art activity; he did so through exhibiting mail art sent in response to his call.

To close the temporal gap between the historical and present time of participatory engagement, and to enable interaction with the work, Galántai invited artists Jean-Jacques

Lebel and István Kántor, both personally known to Filliou, to make performances within the reconstructed space at Artpool P60. Lebel's *Hommage à Robert Filliou* performance on 4 April 1998<sup>203</sup> was a speech in French on Filliou's work, translated simultaneously into Hungarian by Artpool's co-founder Júlia Klaniczay. As Lebel spoke, a Hungarian Roma quartet began playing 'music from the streets of Budapest' within the reconstructed space of the *Poïpoïdrome*. The music became louder and louder until the artist had to shout above the music to be heard. Then artist Tibor Papp danced, spontaneously, with Júlia Klaniczay, while the rest of the audience looked on. When the band stopped, Lebel reprised his address to the audience in English. He described Artpool as having been created twenty years earlier as 'an underground network without internet, just a human network between artists from all around the world'.<sup>204</sup> This is essentially a description of Filliou's concept of The Eternal Network, which suggests Artpool as a centre for permanent creation in its own way. Kántor's performance, *Séance Filliou / Filliou Szeánsz* on 2 June 1998<sup>205</sup> also relied on loud sound as a central component. In this case the sound was a mesmeric industrial soundtrack made louder by the artist's screaming through a megaphone, summoning the spirit of Filliou, whilst wearing a wire coat hanger on his head serving as 'psychic' or 'telepathic antennae' to connect with Filliou's spirit and crossing the physical boundary of the *Poïpoïdrome* to distribute coat hangers to the audience.

Galántai's choice to reconstruct the 1976 physical structure might suggest an understanding of authenticity that is common in a museum environment and that is based on

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<sup>203</sup> Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Hommage à Robert Filliou*, 4 April 1998. Performance at Artpool P60, Budapest. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HhuV1RRxoH0> (accessed 13 January 2015).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> István Kántor, *Séance Filliou / Filliou Szeánsz*, 2 June 1998. Performance at Artpool P60, Budapest. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frftVJqgtzc&t=28s> (accessed 13 January 2015).

the work's historical material production. However, if we consider Galántai's approach to the whole exhibition that served as the context of the reconstruction, the understanding of authenticity changes to one based on the performer's ability to perform authentically – a notion more often applied in performing arts. The exhibition was not only innovative in its design by both embedding and expanding the *Poïpoïdrome* as a physical structure (the grid), but it was also unorthodox in offering the reconstructed *Poïpoïdrome* as a space for new performances (this could probably not happen in a museum as the fear of the historical structure being damaged would prevent it). From this perspective, I argue that Galántai's exhibition is a model for embracing 'iterability' or 'citationality' as the work's core characteristic. Adopted from Jacques Derrida who discussed it mainly in a linguistic context,<sup>206</sup> iteration can be understood as a form of repetition that introduces 'new contexts and variety into the constitution of the same.'<sup>207</sup> Following this idea, we might argue that whilst *Poïpoïdrome* exists in many different forms from the moment of its conception, all its versions contribute to the construction of the same artwork that started in 1963 and continues to emerge until today. The idea of 'iterability' is then particularly useful in relation to thinking about the 'afterlives' of historical performance art: given the absence of an 'original' artwork, could all exhibitions and re-enactments of a performance be regarded as the iterations of the artwork? And what happens to the work's authenticity when iterations are produced without the 'original' artist being involved?

There remains, however, a point of critique in the conception of the *Poïpoïdrome* that Galántai's reconstruction arguably fails to address is the echo of anthropological and ethnographic categorisation inherent in Filliou's unwitting 'colonisation' of Dogon culture in

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<sup>206</sup> See for example Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" (1971) and "Signature Event Context" (1971), and in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (University of Chicago Press 1982), 207-71 and 307-330.

<sup>207</sup> John Anthony Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (Blackwell, 2013), 303.

the first instance. Running counter to Filliou's implied claims of an interchangeability of art and life, this is compounded by the social depiction of the urban proletariat of Budapest (the gypsy band) in an avant-garde gallery to an audience of artists and like-minded people. Equally, it is expressed in bringing a physical boundary ('fourth wall') into the gallery space that divided the performance space from its 'observers', such as happened during the events performed by Kántor and Lebel. This contrasts with the conception of Filliou's centre for permanent creation realised as a demarcated space (to refer back to Marianne Filliou's point) as it frames actions as creative only within an art space that can be considered as psychically and aesthetically charged architectural environment.

Given the work's present existence as a variety of unique objects held in various collections, the question is also whether the *Poïpôidrome* will continue in the future as a space for creative engagement independently from the 'original' artists, as intended by Filliou and Pfeufer, or whether it will become fixed as an installation to be only observed. Artpool's 1998 reconstruction/realisation is then particularly interesting as a model for a simultaneous reconstruction and production of the work's material identity, in which the restrictions on presentation imposed by the status of the work as unique collection item (which has become materially unchangeable) is juxtaposed with a curatorial approach that demonstrates an understanding of the work's identity and historic logic as a centre for permanent creation. The line connecting the *Poïpôidrome* first with Artpool Periodical Space through the *Telepathic Music* postcard and then with Artpool P60 through the 1998 reconstruction of the 1976 version relies on both continuity and change to make sense. In this way, Galántai understands Filliou's preference for the integration of archival, curatorial, collaborative and participatory strategies in manifesting the concept of permanent creation.

This case study was important for my research into exhibiting artworks that are environments activated by the spectator's engagement with the space. To exhibit historical artworks as such, curators not only need to think about how to re-exhibit the objecthood of the historical environment, but also how to allow spectator participation in the reconstructed environment. Without allowing participants' engagement, these works become sculptural installations and cannot be considered as performance. In the case of the Budapest *Poipoïdrome*, Galántai showed an understanding of the importance of participation in the reconstruction, while successfully reconstructing the physical materiality of the 1976 version.

### **3.4. Case Study 3: Revisions: *Zen for Film*, New York, 2015**

*Revisions: Zen for Film* was a practice-led curatorial enquiry into the 'changeability' of post-avant-garde media art as they emerge over time at the intersection of artistic, curatorial and conservation practices. Developed as an intertwined exhibition and publication<sup>208</sup> project by conservator and scholar Hanna B. Hölling, the enquiry focuses on a singular artwork, American-Korean artist Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1962-64) – also known as *Fluxfilm No. 1* – which consists of the projection of a blank film roll of approximately twenty-minutes' duration. This work exposes the performative and material qualities of film projection and reveals an indeterminable state of existence of the artwork – between object and event – that doesn't fit comfortably within the conventions of the Museum, where art is often understood as a physical object. *Zen for Film* raises a curatorial challenge as an artwork that not only 'refuses simple classification,' but whose physical appearance has been 'radically shaped by curatorial, conservation, and presentation decisions' since its

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<sup>208</sup> *Revisions – Zen for Film*, 18 September 2015 – 21 February 2016, Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, New York, and *Revisions – Zen for Film* (New York: Bard Graduate Centre & University of Chicago Press, 2015).

conception.<sup>209</sup> To curate this artwork Hölling proposes to explore it as ‘a “thing” and its world, its event, and its process.’<sup>210</sup>

Hölling’s curatorial enquiry into exhibiting *Zen for Film* occurred in parallel to my project exploring Davies’ 1960s performances in the exhibition *Silent Explosion*. It provided a model for curating historical event-based and multimedia artworks, and for exhibition-making as research methodology. In particular, her exhibition proposes the archive as ‘the source of [an artwork’s present] materiality.’<sup>211</sup> The issue that Hölling’s exhibition makes apparent, comparable to my curatorial approach, is that the exhibition of a historical multimedia and event-based artwork is not only defined by the permissions given by the artist (or his estate, in Paik’s case), but also by the ‘judgements of those involved in making decisions [about the archive] subject to ruling conventions and cultures that determine the contours of what can be said or made’;<sup>212</sup> in other words, by the interventions of the curators, archivists and conservators in preparation for these works’ presentation. This issue became very relevant in my work (as curator) with the artist, and AC-NMW staff toward exhibiting The Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive as part of *Silent Explosion*.

Underpinned by her background as a conservation scholar and supported by her work as visiting professor at Bard Graduate Center, New York, Hölling’s enquiry into the expanded field of curating connects the practice of presentation with that of preservation, or in other words, questions around the visibility and the materiality of artworks. The

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<sup>209</sup> *Revisions: Zen for Film*, Exhibition handout, (New York: Bard Graduate Centre, September 2015).

<sup>210</sup> Hölling, *Revisions*, 16.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*



publication *Revisions – Zen for Film* is structured around ten thematic chapters – or ‘revisions’ as Hölling terms them. Through these revisions, the author proposes that we rethink the artwork in its critical, historical and cultural contexts ‘the time after the work “happened”’<sup>213</sup> to demonstrate that Paik himself encouraged both indeterminacy and multiple authorship in the work’s emergence. Under the theme of ‘Encounters’, for example, she makes apparent that while Paik himself presented the work as live projection event, he also allowed its simultaneous distribution of it as a multiple boxed edition of ephemera (or *Fluxkit*) under the title *Fluxfilm No.1*, as part of *Fluxfilm Anthology*, a film compilation assembled between 1962 and 1970 by Fluxus impresario George Maciunas. Maciunas’ ideas for the distribution and mediation of *Zen for Film* as a multiple can be considered as a curatorial intervention that has contributed to the work’s material change (from event to object) and influenced its further proliferation.

Based on her understanding of the work’s historical conception, and her own experience of *Zen for Film* in exhibitions variously as a canned film reel (Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2009), as an analogue film loop on a vintage projector (Museum Ostwall, Dortmund, 2010/11) and as a digital video projection (Tate Liverpool, UK, 2011), Hölling asks ‘*what, how and when* is the artwork?’.<sup>214</sup> Through her ten rounds of revisions Hölling develops an argument that proposes that the only viable response to this question is in understanding the artwork as the sum of its variations and transitions. Given the work’s inherently changeable appearance, she proposes that curators, conservators and mediators of *Zen for Film* should encourage proliferation and the hybridity of approaches to its

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., x.

presentation and conservation, embracing both its physical impermanence and ‘distributed authorship’ as the fundamental condition of its survival.<sup>215</sup>

Hölling’s argument through her publication, as well as exhibition, is to overcome conventional medium-specific and duality-bound categorisations such as ephemerality / permanence, and old / new media, proposing instead an understanding of a fluid coalescence of visuality and materiality in art. She argues that we may look at all artworks, whether conceived through ‘old’ or ‘new’ media, as of relative duration, some being slow, often longer than one’s lifetime such as paintings or sculpture in more durable media, others rapid such as performance art, installation art or artworks using the Internet as their media. Her suggestion to think about all artworks as changing materiality allows her to propose a rethinking of traditional cultures and practices of conservation and curation, which, hitherto, have approached art as a fixed, permanent and physically bound object, and instead to develop an approach that allows her to consider post-avant-garde artworks as characterised by an ‘aesthetics of change.’<sup>216</sup>

Hölling also argues that engaging with *Zen for Film* from an interlinked perspective of visuality (what we see), materiality (its tangible and intangible elements), and performance (how it works, and how it is experienced when exhibited) might be helpful in defining new curatorial strategies for the future. Her overall argument is that to ensure the maintenance of changeable artworks in collections, ‘scholars, curators, conservators, and caretakers – must understand profoundly *what* they are’.<sup>217</sup> To do so, it is not enough to present relics and

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 80. See also in Chapter 2.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 17.

documents or to rely on the memory of the artist; but we also need to explore how the work ‘behaves’, how it functions, which is apparent from its appearance in exhibitions and collections. The exhibition, which Hölling developed alongside the publication and with help from postgraduate students at Bard’s Graduate Centre, provides the eleventh layer of her revisions that addresses the behaviour of *Zen for Film* by comparing the work’s multiple existence in collections as object-relic (e.g. a canned film reel), as object/multiple (*Fluxfilm No. 1.*) and as installed-event (instruction for projection). While previous exhibitions presented *Zen for Film* through showing only one of these three versions, Hölling’s exhibition exposes the work’s material multiplicity and changeability by presenting three versions of *Zen for Film* from the The Gilbert and Lila Silvernam Fluxus Collection, (MoMA, New York) simultaneously.

As apparent from Hölling’s 2017 drawing of the final layout (Figure 10), the exhibition had two central viewing spaces: a dark, square-shaped gallery room, and a white-walled landing area (or ante-room), enhancing the black and white aesthetics of the artwork on display. The dark space was divided further by a temporary wall that created a corridor that at once blocked the view from the landing and functioned as a tool to navigate the spectator’s movement in the space. In the landing Hölling displayed her publication *Revisions: Zen for Film* alongside a ‘digital interactive’ kiosk and a handout for the exhibition. The spectator needed to go through the landing before entering and after leaving the main space as the exhibition had only one entrance.

Upon entry from the landing, the spectator faced the outer side of the temporary wall with a wall-text revealing the central issue of Hölling’s research into ‘what, *how* and when is *Zen for Film*?’ by asking:

Is *Zen for Film* an object to be respected as an artefact and for its material idiosyncrasies – as object “multiple” or an object / relic? Is it an idea, a concept, or is it an event, a performance, or a process? How has what it once was, or what it has become in the process of reinterpretation, determined what it now is?<sup>218</sup>

Next to the wall text and in an environmentally protected vitrine built into the wall *Zen for Film* is presented as an object-relic: a metal canister (c. 1965) with masking tape and Paik’s handwritten inscriptions as evidence of its ‘authenticity.’ The canister is presented without the 16mm clear film reel that is believed to be the only linear version of the film from the 1960s (Figure 11).<sup>219</sup> As the handout explains,<sup>220</sup> although the film reel is also part of the collection it is too fragile to be on display and kept separately from the canister in cold storage in MoMA’s Archive. Following the corridor to the left, the visitor is guided by the sound and flickering light coming from the dark space behind the temporary wall. Just before entering the main space, there is another vitrine built into the wall in the corner with *Zen for Film* presented this time as an object-multiple: a *Fluxkit* (c. 1965) including an 8mm clear film leader, a label card and a white plastic box (Figure 12). Only after passing the relic and the multiple the spectator finally enters the main viewing space, where *Zen for Film* is presented as an installed-event (Figure 13). The installation consists of a 16mm (new) blank film reel projected on a loop onto the wall using a vintage model of an EIKI film projector placed on a plinth in the middle of the room. The event is the sound of the machine, and the sight of the flickering white light showing a slowly emerging image of the film collecting dust particles on its surface. The ‘image’ is completed by the actions of the spectator-

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<sup>218</sup> Text transcribed from photographic documentation of the wall-label.

<sup>219</sup> The documentation of the exhibition is available online. See *Revisions: Zen for Film*, New York: Bard Graduate Centre, 2015. <https://www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/8/revisions-zen-for-film> (accessed 25 February 2016).

<sup>220</sup> Hanna B. Hölling, “Revisions-Zen for Film,” Exhibition handout, (New York: Bard Graduate Centre, 2016).

performers, who, while moving around the room cast their shadows on the wall. Also in the room are seats that spectators can move around to sit and observe the performance of others. Depending on where they sit/stand in the room, they can also experience *Zen for Film* as the two objects and the projection event at once. The spectators exit by walking back into the corridor to return to the landing (ante-room).

In the landing (Figure 14), the publication is displayed alongside a ‘digital interactive’<sup>221</sup> and the exhibition handout. The digital interactive is a touch-screen kiosk, where spectators can further explore the artwork on display by following either of the two entry points marked by two black dots on a white screen. If they choose ‘Zen for Film’ they get more information about the artwork and its versions in different collections and exhibitions; if they choose ‘Related Works’ they can see other artworks that might be considered as inspirations, antecedents, contemporaries and homages to *Zen for Film*. The spectator can interact with the digital interactive by rearranging the content of ‘Related Works’ according to the seven concepts with which the work engages as proposed by Hölling and her students: boredom, chance, materiality, nothingness, silence, time and trace. Finally, the exhibition handout includes information about Paik, and the objects on display presented in the context of Hölling’s research.<sup>222</sup> For example, when writing about the projection in the dark space, she talks about her curatorial attempt to explore ‘what Paik might have had in mind when he projected his blank film in the early days of its existence and does not aspire to reconstruct the initial experience of viewing it.’<sup>223</sup> Similarly, while introducing the object-relic and the object-multiple, she discusses her attempt to communicate their commodity

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<sup>221</sup> The documentation of the website in the exhibition is available online at <https://www.linkedbyair.net/projects/10-revisions-zen-for-film>, and the website itself is accessible at <http://bgcdml.net/revisions/app/> (accessed 15 March 2016).

<sup>222</sup> Hölling, *Revisions-Zen for Film*, Exhibition handout.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

value by presenting them behind vitrines, in contrast to the projection, which is an environment using replica objects and can be re-instantiated any time. The handout asks the reader to consider and explore Hölling's question of what, where and how *Zen for Film* 'is' by comparing the objects' relationship to the artwork.

The issue of authenticity becomes apparent throughout the exhibition but especially in the case of the object multiple (*Fluxkit*), which was neither made by the artist nor followed Paik's intentions but is nonetheless still collected as *Zen for Film*. Given the material and authorial difference between Maciunas' multiple and Paik's live projections, the question arises whether we can still talk about the multiple as the same artwork or a 'different piece.'<sup>224</sup> What makes an artwork 'authentic'? While displayed separately from the three collection items (relic, multiple, projection based on instructions) in the gallery, the publication, the handout, and the digital interactive in the landing area are nonetheless presented as aesthetically integral to the exhibition and visually connected through shared design elements. The font used in the publication is repeated in the font used for the wall texts, while the digital interactive is loosely organised around Hölling's revisions. The digital interactive is also conceived both as an educational tool and an artwork itself, designed by New York-based Linked by Air as a homage to *Zen for Film*. Similar to the exhibition design, the digital interactive follows *Zen for Film*'s minimalist black and white visual aesthetics by presenting on its homepage two black dots on a white surface. The two dots, as discussed earlier, represent the two routes into exploring the world of *Zen for Film* as the historical context and the related works in the exhibition. When a dot was tapped, a differently colored pixel (R, G, or B) appeared on the screen leaving a trace on the screen as

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

the digital equivalent of the dust particles gathered on the empty film reel through its projection. After the exhibition, the interactive's content was transformed into a website as a durational artwork that will keep evolving in the future through interaction. Given the publication and the digital interactive's aesthetic connection with *Zen for Film*, a question proposed by the curator – without a desire to give a straightforward response – is whether the objects in the landing/ante-room could be considered are part of the artwork's evolving archival materiality even if they are not items that museums might want to collect?

Hölling's approach presents the exhibition as a discourse, and not merely as the illustration of her research. The experience required spectators to constantly change perspectives on the work and explore its current properties as well as what it might become. The exhibition proposes *Zen for Film* as an incomplete and still evolving artwork regardless that Paik is not around anymore. The mode of presentation – which focuses on emphasising the material variability and multiplicity of *Zen for Film* – generates a circularity and fluidity which aesthetically parallels how the artwork actively engages with duration, systems, process, media and time. Hölling's attention to the artwork's afterlife through its collection and distribution, as well as its historical conception and the artist's intention as part of the work's materiality, presents an important model for exhibition practice through which complex issues of conservation and curation can be mapped out and intersect to develop new methodologies, sensibilities and strategies towards the presentation and preservation of post-avant-garde art.

### **3.5. Reflection**

In this chapter, I have further explored issues of performance and curating in contemporary art, especially in relation to questions of materiality and changeability, the relationship

between the artwork, the archive and the exhibition, and the influence of curatorial narrative on the spectator's encounter with the work. The three exhibitions provided three very different models in response to these issues.

Regarding changeability and the relationship between the artwork, the archive and the exhibition, Hendeles' four-room installation in *Partners* is probably the most unique and unchangeable. Here the curator-auteur uses unique objects from her private collection to generate a curatorial narrative. The uniqueness of the installation arises from Hendeles' curatorial treatment of the objects in a specifically designed environment, within which the objects are individually medium-specific but become part of a mixed-media installation and a performative environment. In *Partners*, changeability is therefore only apparent in terms of artworks' interpretation, according to differing spectators' perception, while the objects remain materially protected and fixed. Conversely, the 1998 reconstruction of the 1976 Budapest *Poïpoïdrome* in the *International Installation Festival* and the exhibition of multiple versions of *Zen for Film* in *Revision: Zen for Film* are both case studies that explore how post-avant-garde and event-based artworks with changeable materiality can be exhibited. Changeability in these two cases is apparent both in the artworks' conceptual openness to reinterpretation, and in the change in their physical appearance due to later curatorial interventions regardless of either its conceptual basis or the artist's intention. The histories of both the *Poïpoïdrome* and *Zen for Film* demonstrate that these works are materially in flux and exist between concept, event and object. However, while the *Poïpoïdrome's* changeability between object, environment and event is demonstrably encouraged by the 'original' artists, Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer, *Zen for Film* has only been exhibited by Nam June Paik as projection and changed from event (projection) to object (multiple and relic) only due to external interventions through its distribution, collection, exhibition.



Regardless of whether they are inherently changeable or changed by intervention, in both cases the works now exist as a multiplicity of archival materiality (objects, documentation, instruction, relic). Furthermore, regardless of how these works have been conceived or presented by the original artists historically, it is this multiple archival materiality that provides the basis for future exhibitions and interpretations, which will influence the appearance, and consequently the spectator's experience and understanding, of these artworks.

The histories of the *Poïpoïdrome* and *Zen for Film* show how artworks change through the decisions made by those who care for their archive, which include the artists and their estates, archivists, curators, conservators. Both Galántai and Hölling's curatorial approaches present a unique position in this respect. In the case of the *Poïpoïdrome*, Galántai's decision to reconstruct one real space-time version of the *Poïpoïdrome* might seem problematic at first sight, given his negligence of all other versions (maquette, plans) that also contribute to the artwork's identity. However, the reconstruction could be considered as a model where a curator successfully works within the limits of material conservation to protect the status and authenticity of the collection item while also embracing the artwork's fundamental conceptual characteristics and eventness. In the case of *Zen for Film*, Hölling's decision to re-exhibit one of Paik's best-known works, with a long exhibition history, might risk just repeating already existing narratives. However, her unique curatorial approach of simultaneously presenting different versions of the artwork puts *Zen for Film* under a new light and provides a new understanding of the work. As scenographer and media artist Frank den Ouden argues:

The time of exhibitions as spatial arrangements of artefacts is past and the view of exhibitions as finished 'products' prepared by curators and designers before they reach the public, no longer applies. Instead, what is required is an approach of the exhibition based on the

assumption of an open-ended space-time arrangement of a set of partially controlled processes that reach their completion through the participation of the audience once the doors have opened. This presents a quantum leap opening a multitude of open, nonlinear narrative structures.<sup>225</sup>

The three exhibitions that I have analysed here were all examples that renegotiated the exhibition as a finished ‘product’. I propose that these exhibitions can instead be considered as media through which these curators could think and speak.

Each exhibition is based on a specific spatial design that is developed to present the curator’s understanding of the aesthetics of the artworks on display. Hendeles’ installation unfolds over four rooms around Cattelan’s objects, whose presence solicits the spectator’s participation in a performative encounter. The contemporary art objects are positioned in a very particular way within the environment, and the use of archival tropes and vernacular objects makes the spectator aware of the constructed character of interpretation as well as her role and function as performer. Hendeles’ approach follows the ‘theatrical’ tradition in visual arts that emerged from 1960s minimalism and has been critiqued at the time by Michael Fried in *Art & Objecthood*<sup>226</sup> for its relational and situational nature, which engages the spectator as participant in an encounter, thus breaking up the modernist narrative and sensibility, where the spectator is considered as observer or witness. The 1976 Budapest *Poïpoïdrome*, as well as Galántai’s 1998 reconstruction of it, is also designed as a space of engagement with the spectator as participant, but one where perception and interpretation is much less defined by the curator compared to *Partners*, for example. Galántai’s grid design in the exhibition, where documents arriving in response to his call are attached to a wire structure and arranged

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<sup>225</sup> Oudsten, *Space.Time. Narrative*, 12.

<sup>226</sup> Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (University of Chicago Press, 1998).

in the space based on his own conceptual association, enhances the conceptual characteristics of the *Poipoidrome* as an artwork with a networked sensibility. Galántai's curatorial approach is apparent from his description of the exhibition/installation:

The artistic products coming from different countries are linked to each other according to their content, erasing the borders between countries. Just like on the net, in the context of the installation strongly related things move away from each other, and the apparently distant ones become associated. There is no need of explanation, everybody understands his own version and the lecture of information will be based on personal horizons of expectations. This multilinearity is essential to all functioning installation.<sup>227</sup>

In *Revisions: Zen for Film*, the circular design of the exhibition creates a room surrounded by a corridor that – similarly to *Partners* – guides the movement and perception of the spectator, who can look at works from specific perspectives through which they become aware of the curatorial narrative, which, in this case, is in fact the critique of such a narrative. Just like *Zen for Film* itself, the exhibition rejects a narrative by exposing the work's material simultaneity as object, event and concept at once.

While the curators' backgrounds differ in being a private collector, an artist and a conservator/scholar, all three exhibitions manifest an understanding of the 'multiple' or 'distributed' authorship that characterises most contemporary art. As philosopher and art critic Boris Groys explains,<sup>228</sup> this is due to the change in the 'social function' of the exhibition, which has altered the traditional role of the artist as producer of unique art objects, as well as the curator as selector/exhibitor of art objects. Groys argues that at least since Marcel Duchamp and the idea of the readymade, the production and selection of an artwork

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<sup>227</sup> György Galántai, "International Installation Festival Autumn Season," *Artpool. hu*, <http://www.artpool.hu/events98.html> (accessed 12 December 2015).

<sup>228</sup> Boris Groys, "Multiple Authorship," *IDEA* 26 (2007), n.p., <http://idea.ro/revista/?q=en/node/41&articol=469> (accessed 8 September 2016). Republished from *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Exhibitions and Biennials*, eds. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 93–99.

is essentially the same process, which makes the role of the artist and the curator similar and changes the idea of the author from someone who makes unique objects to someone ‘who authorises’ something as art.<sup>229</sup> He then goes on to state that ‘[A] distinction between the (curated) exhibition and (artistic) installation is still commonly made, but it is essentially obsolete.’<sup>230</sup>

Selection as creation and the curator as author is most evident in *Partners*, as Hendeles chose not only unique art objects to display – such as Cattelan’s works – but arranged all sorts of objects to create her tableaux. While less subjective in their approach, both Galántai and Hölling are also aware of their authorial contribution to the emergence of artworks by defining the appearance of the archive in their exhibitions. Both exhibitions can provide models for exhibiting post-avant-garde practice (including performance art) where the authority of the ‘original’ artists over the material remains is respected, but the work continues to proliferate through the curator’s approach. The authenticity of the reproduction depends on the curators’ ability to maintain the material identity of these works through balancing their visual, material, and behavioural aesthetics with the protection of objects from their historical production. While findings from all three exhibitions, and curatorial approaches, contributed to my practice, it was Hölling’s discourse around of the ‘aesthetics of change’ (see also Chapter 2) that provided a key conceptual framework to my work in relation to the exhibition, particularly in the presentation of Davies’ 1968 *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve* performance.

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<sup>229</sup> Groys, “Multiple Authorship,” n.p.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

Figures 1 and 2 are not available online.

Please refer to Hendeles et.al. *Partners* (München: Haus der Kunst, 2003), 4. and 32.

Figure 3 is not available online.

Please refer to Hendeles et.al. *Partners* (München: Haus der Kunst, 2003), 42.

Figures 4 is not available online.

Please refer to Hendeles et.al. *Partners* (München: Haus der Kunst, 2003), 43.



Figure 5: Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. *Poipoïdrome à Espace-Temps Réel No. 1*. Budapest: Young Artists' Club, 1976, organised by László Beke. Photo from preview night. Photo ©György Fazekas. Courtesy of Artpool, Budapest.





Figure 6: Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. *Poïpoïdrome à Espace-Temps Réel No.1*. (1976). Object-relic from installation. One of 41 cards with photographs showing people in Budapest. 11 x 17 cm. Collection of Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest. Photo©Artpool, Budapest.

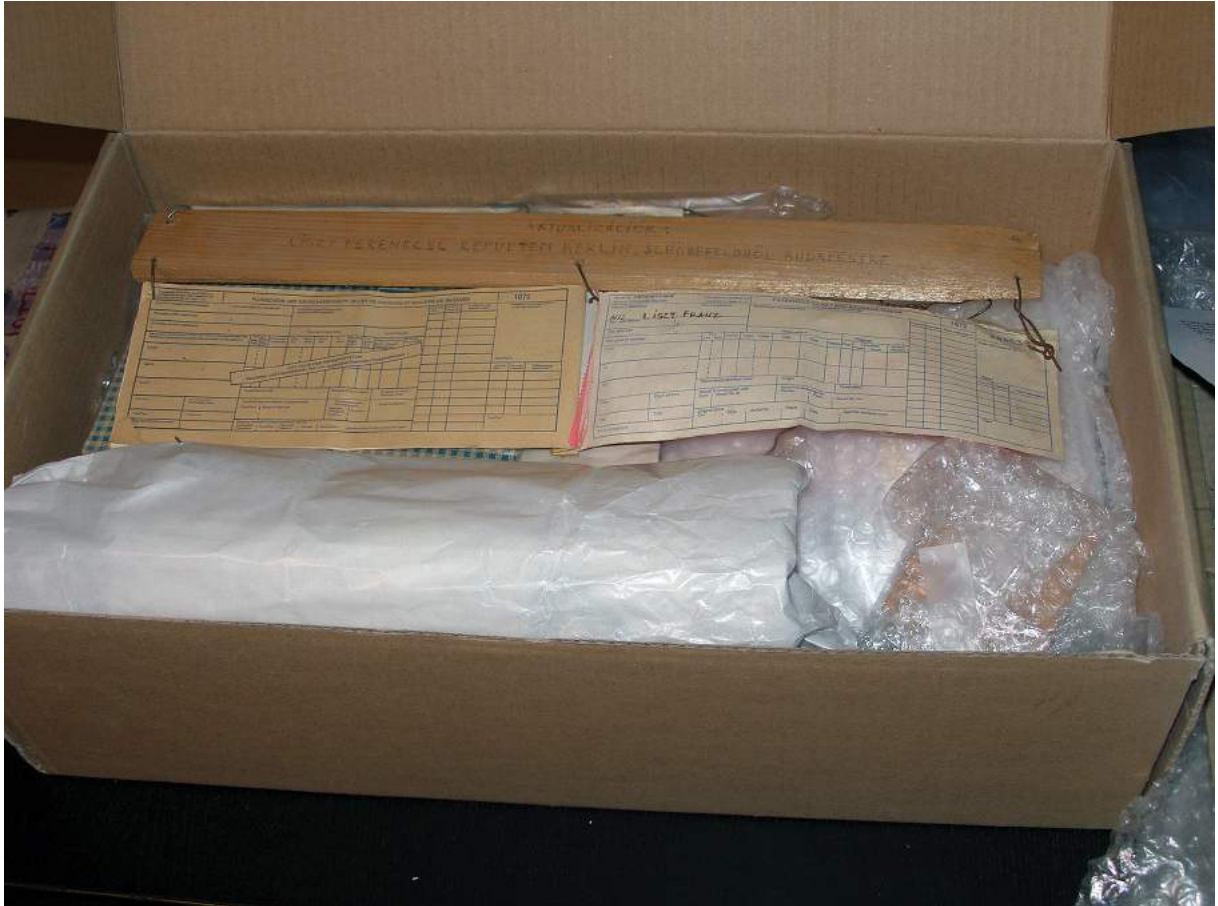


Figure 7: Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. *Poïpoïdrome à Espace-Temps Réel No.1.* (1976). Object-relic from installation. Wood, flight ticket with inscription “Aktualizációk: Liszt FerencceL repültem Berlin-Schönefeldről Budapestre. (Actualisations: I flew to Budapest from Berlin-Schönefeld with Franz Liszt), 42 x 13 x 1 cm. Collection of Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest. Photo© Artpool, Budapest.



Figure 8: Robert Filliou and Joachim Pfeufer. *Poïpoïdrome à Espace-Temps Réel No.1.*, Budapest: Young Artists' Club, 1976, organised by László Beke. Photo ©Zsigmond Károlyi. Courtesy of Artpool, Budapest.



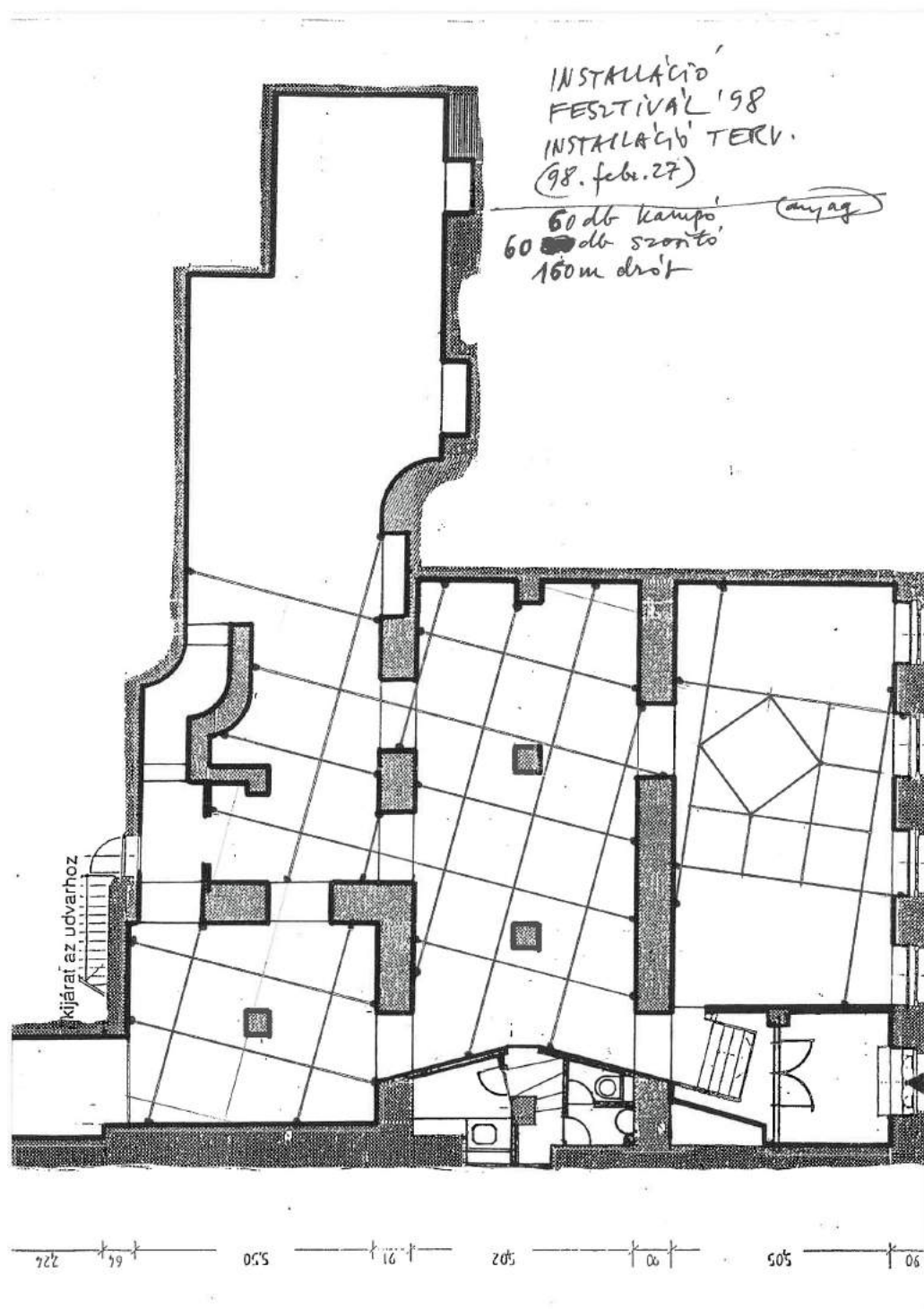


Figure 9: György Galántai (artist-curator). Exhibition design for the *International Installation Festival*, Budapest: Artpool P60, 1998. Floorplan with grid layout design showing the position of the reconstructed *Poipoidrome*. ©György Galántai & Artpool, Budapest.

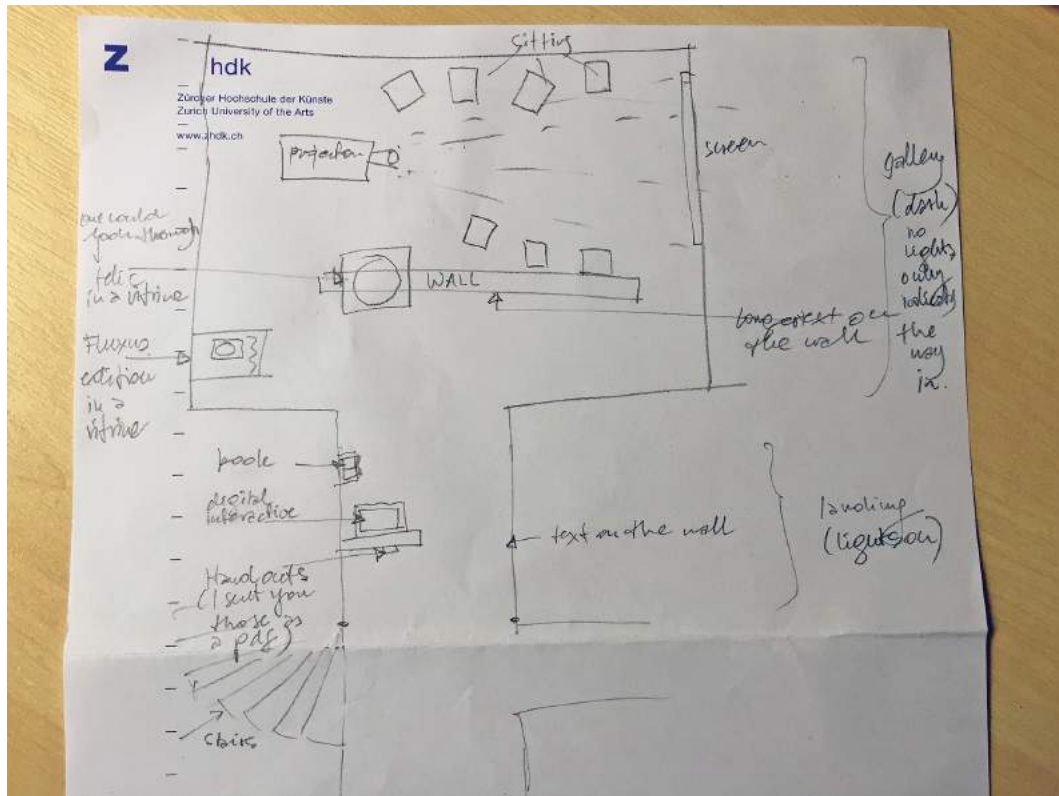


Figure 10: Hanna B. Hölling (curator). Exhibition layout of *Revisions: Zen for Film*, Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, New York, 2015-2016. Photo ©Hanna B. Hölling.



Figure 11: *Revisions: Zen for Film*, New York: Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, 2015-2016. Exhibition view. Photo ©Hanna B. Hölling.



Figure 12: Nam June Paik. *Zen for Film*, ca. 1965. Plastic box with offset label, containing blank film loop and offset card. Assembled and designed by George Maciunas, The Museum of Modern Art, The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection. Exhibition view. *Revisions: Zen for Film*. New York: Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, 2015-2016. Photo ©Hanna B. Hölling.



Figure 13: Nam June Paik. *Zen for Film*, 1962–64. 16mm blank film leader projection, looped, Eiki projector. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection. Exhibition view in *Revisions: Zen for Film*. New York: Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, 2015-2016, curated by Hanna B. Hölling. Photo ©Hanna B. Hölling.



Figure 14: Digital interactive and publication in *Revisions: Zen for Film*. New York: Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre, 2015-2016, Exhibition view. Photo ©Hanna B. Hölling.

## CHAPTER 4: CURATORIAL PRACTICE

### 4.1 Introduction to Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art

*Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* (19 November 2015 – 20 March 2016) was a thematic retrospective exhibition at National Museum Cardiff that explored Ivor Davies' lifetime interest in destruction in art and society. The exhibition positioned Davies' performances between 1966 and 1968 as pivotal to understanding his broader practice. By curating this work alongside painting and sculpture from different stages of the artist's career, it sought to identify similarities between his approach to artistic production across media as indicative of his lifelong interest in destruction as material transformation. The exhibition also aimed to address potential differences in local and international understandings of the artist's work. Davies' profile as a practitioner in his native Wales is distinguished by his contribution to minority language activism and the engagement with the specificities of Welsh arts and culture. Internationally, his practice is perhaps better known as an example of late twentieth century destruction art.

Destruction art includes artworks in a wide range of media and found its highest profile expression through the *Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS), London in 1966. The symposium was initiated by artist and activist Gustav Metzger, who coined the term 'auto-destructive art' and defined it in three manifestos between 1959 and 1961 as 'a form of public art for industrial societies'<sup>231</sup> and as 'art which contains within itself an agent which

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<sup>231</sup> Gustav Metzger, "Auto-Destructive Art (1959)," *Radicalart.info*, <http://radicalart.info/destruction/metzger.html> (accessed 23 January 2016).



automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time.’<sup>232</sup> DIAS was a month-long gathering in September 1966 in London, including a three-day symposium (9-11 September, Africa Centre, Covent Garden) and performances and events at various venues and sites.<sup>233</sup> It was produced by Metzger as initiator and main organiser within the Honorary Committee that also included John Sharkey, Ivor Davies, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Bob Cobbing, Wolf Vostell, Mario Amaya, Frank Popper, Roy Ascott, Enrico Baj, Jim Haynes and Barry Miles. More than a hundred artists from eighteen different countries contributed to DIAS on the theme of destruction in art. The event provided the context for Davies’ earliest performances in 1966, but theme of ‘destruction’ remained influential in his performances until 1968 and other artworks until the present day.

The exhibition in 2015 sought to bring different artworks, perceptions and aspects of Davies’ lifetime practice together, noting that whether working through painting, sculpture, happenings or environments, his concern and understanding of creation through destruction as material transformation, and vice versa, remained present. There were, then, two central challenges in developing curatorial approaches toward exhibiting Davies’ 1960s performances. The first related to how historical performance art can be presented in the Museum alongside wide-ranging work in traditional media, such as painting and sculpture. The second related to how the exhibition can change perspectives on Davies’ practice, and evidence his international significance, through presenting his unique private archive of his own destruction art performances and of DIAS in general. The title of the exhibition, *Silent*

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<sup>232</sup> Gustav Metzger, “Manifesto Auto-Destructive Art (1960),” *Radicalart.info*, <http://radicalart.info/destruction/metzger.html> (accessed 23 January 2016).

<sup>233</sup> Performances were presented, amongst others, at the Mercury Theatre, the London Free School Playground and surrounding sites near Notting Hill, in the basement of Better Books at 94 Charing Cross Road and at the ICA at 17 Dover Street.

*Explosion*, is borrowed from a performance devised by Davies on 30 September 1966 (Mercury Theatre, London). Regarded by Davies as one of his most significant performances,<sup>234</sup> *Silent Explosion* (discussed in detail in 4.1.1.1) was wholly undocumented and as such reflects the curatorial challenges of the research and exhibition overall. In featuring a silent film footage of an exploding atom bomb moreover, this performance also highlights issues of spectatorship and, as Duchamp would have it, 'posterity' in relation to events and their documentation that are central to the concerns of this research.

The exhibition occupied 680 square metres gallery space and the stairwell area in the West Wing Contemporary Galleries of National Museum Cardiff, and included over 400 items on display. Two galleries at its architectural centre, and the connecting stairwell area in between, were dedicated to Davies' performances between 1966 and 1968. Gallery 21 (Figures 15, 16, 17, 18) exhibited a contemporary installation restaging the 1968 multimedia experimental theatre event *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*; while the stairwell (Figures 19, 20, 21) and Gallery 22 (Figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 26) was wholly occupied by Davies' *Destruction* in Art archive. The remainder of the exhibition, Gallery 20 (Figures 27, 28) and Gallery 24 (Figures 29, 30), consisted of objects from between the 1950s and 2000s selected from Davies' studio and AC-NMW collection, to reveal his interest in destruction across media both as subject and as the process of material transformation. These included childhood drawings of the WW2 bombings of Cardiff, optical-kinetic sculptures from the early 1960s, abstract paintings of 1950s-1960s that include signs of physical destruction, and recent works exploring the erosion of the Welsh language and the destruction of communities. The

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<sup>234</sup> Davies remarks on the significance of this performance in Roms, "Origins: Ivor Davies," 27. and again in Davies, "Silent Explosion," in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 37.

exhibition was accompanied by a series of events, and a bilingual (English - Welsh) publication published by Occasional Papers.<sup>235</sup> I co-curated the whole exhibition with Nicholas Thornton, Head of Fine Art at AC-NMW, who also supervised my work on behalf of the Museum as partner in the CDA. I also collaborated closely with Ivor Davies whose archive was the object and subject of my research, and whose contribution throughout the preparation for the exhibition influenced the curatorial process. My research was supervised throughout by research and project consultant and editor of the publication, Professor Heike Roms, then based at Aberystwyth University. The project management team I worked with between 2013 and 2015 at National Museum Cardiff included Pip Diment (Exhibitions and Programmes Manager), Emily O'Reilly (Paper Conservator), Rose Miller (Painting Conservator), Heidi Evans (Events Officer), Simon Tozzo (3D Designer), Sian Lile-Pastore (Learning, Participation and Interpretation Officer), Rhodri Viney (Digital Content Assistant), Lee Jones (Technician), Charlie Upton (Lighting Designer) and Chris Hardwick (Technical Officer AV).

This chapter presents a critical and reflective commentary on my archival-curatorial practice as research toward the conception and development of the exhibition and its key outcomes. Building on the discussion and review of exhibition models and curatorial approaches in Chapter 2 and 3, this chapter outlines and evaluates my response in practice to working collaboratively in curating historical performance art in a museum environment. The commentary supports the Practice as Research methodological framework of my work and presents the curatorial process as 'thinking in-and-through practice.'<sup>236</sup> It also contextualises the spectator's experience of the exhibition, whether directly or through its documentation,

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<sup>235</sup> Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 2015.

<sup>236</sup> O'Neill and Wilson, *Curating Research*, 15.

and accounts for the research process and key decisions that led to the exhibition's final realisation. This chapter should be considered alongside the documentation of the curatorial process and the exhibition as presented in this thesis, online at [juditbodor.info/PhD](http://juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive).<sup>237</sup>

Firstly, I provide an overview of what preceded my work in the exhibition. This includes biographical information about Davies' 1960s performances (4.1.1.1.), a summary of previous research undertaken into this body of work (4.1.1.2.), a summary of past exhibitions that displayed parts of his archival collection (4.1.1.3.) and the context and background of the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award, as part of which this research was undertaken (4.1.1.4). Secondly, I describe my archival-curatorial approach to Davies' archival collection in the context of the artist's studio, which included creating an annotative catalogue for the Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive (or Ivor Davies DiA Archive) through indexing, cataloguing and annotating documents in the collection (4.2.1.), and the generation of further archival material through research, site visits and oral history (4.2.2). Thirdly, I analyse the central features of the exhibition-making process, focusing on the overall exhibition design (4.3.1.) and on approaches to exhibiting the archive in different ways, including documentary modes of display (4.3.2.1), and performative forms of remediation (4.3.2.2. and 4.3.2.3) and remodelling (4.3.3). Finally, I discuss other modes of dissemination of the archive, exhibition, and research, particularly through event-curating (4.3.4.). The chapter identifies the curatorial challenges of exhibiting Davies' 1960s performances, as well as those of documenting and reflecting upon curatorial Practice as Research. Overall, given the necessity of curating performance from archival collections and

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<sup>237</sup> See [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) for online documentation.

its currency, I will detail and position my research of exhibition-making as an archival practice through which I contributed to both the art historical understanding of destruction art as well as to the field of curatorial practice toward presenting historical ‘event-structured’ artworks in museums.

#### **4.1.1. Background to the research and exhibition**

##### **4.1.1.1. Ivor Davies, Destruction in Art, 1966-1968**

Davies’ interest in destruction as a means of transformation and creation in art was already apparent in his works in the early 1950s, when he explored the material and formal properties of painting. Affected by his childhood experiences of war and inspired by European avant-garde artists such as Alberto Burri, Roberto Crippa, Antoni Tàpies and Manolo Millares, Davies gradually turned towards abstraction, making cuts and holes on the surface of his canvases and introducing organic, disintegrative and corrosive materials such as soil, coal and scrap metal to his palette, thereby transcending the picture plane. By the mid-1960s his interest extended to Op Art and Kinetic Art, especially inspired by the works of the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAV) and Jean Tinguely.<sup>238</sup> Davies was keeping pace with these contemporary international influences through optical-kinetic works that also featured in the *Silent Explosion* exhibition. Davies moved to Edinburgh in 1963, the year of the first *International Drama Conference* (organised by John Calder and Jim Haynes) which provided the setting for one of the earliest happenings in the UK, involving American artists Ken Dewey and Allan Kaprow, alongside Mark Boyle and Joan Hills from Britain.<sup>239</sup> Davies

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<sup>238</sup> GRAV was a Parisian artist collective active between 1960 and 1968. The group was interested in investigating the relationships between art, society and science by producing large-scale interactive sculptural experiments that used various types of artificial light and mechanical movement. Jean Tinguely (1925–91) was a Swiss artist best known for his *Homage to New York* (1960), a kinetic sculpture that intentionally self-destructed in front of an audience at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

<sup>239</sup> 2-7 September 1963. For details of the happening see Angela Bartie, “Culture and (Im)Morality: The Year of Happening, 1963,” in *The Edinburgh Festivals, Culture and Society in Post-war Britain*, ed. Angela Bartie

arrived in Scotland in the autumn to take up a lecturer post in Art History (modern period), Department of Fine Art at University of Edinburgh,<sup>240</sup> and missed out on seeing the happening.<sup>241</sup> His position as a university lecturer also led him to engage with a different network of people (mostly through the Edinburgh University Staff Club) than those involved in the local avant-garde art scene at the time, developed around newly established countercultural venues such as the Traverse Theatre and the Paperback Bookshop.<sup>242</sup> Until September 1966 there is no evidence that Davies would have been involved in any performance events;<sup>243</sup> however, his writings from 1964 already show an increasing interest in engaging with avant-garde theatre practice.<sup>244</sup> At the same time, his interest in material transformation further developed through his teaching; and particularly through meeting Gustav Metzger in early 1966 in the context of the *Ravensbourne Symposium*, that led to

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(Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 116-150.

<sup>240</sup> The Department of Fine Art at University of Edinburgh was developed after the Second World War by art historian David Talbot Rice (1903-1972). See: Papers of Professor David Talbot Rice, *Jisc Archives Hub*, <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/e9ab353e-bbe2-3933-b76d-a874fb200772> (accessed 14 September 2016). It offers a five-year degree combining studio practice of fine art with the academic study of history of art. Davies later also became the first curator (until 1978) of the Talbot Rice Gallery, established in 1975 to realise posthumously Talbot Rice's hope for an arts centre at the University. See *Talbot Rice Gallery Website*, <https://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/facility/talbot-rice-gallery> (accessed 14 September 2016).

<sup>241</sup> Davies often remarks that while he didn't see happenings in person until he made his own, he knew about certain works from publications such as the 1965 'Happening' issue of the TDR: *Tulane Drama Review*, edited by Michael Kirby. Personal conversations with the artist, November 2013.

<sup>242</sup> The Paperback Bookshop opened in 1959 on Charles Street and run by Jim Haynes until 1963, who sold it upon co-founding the Traverse Theatre with John Calder and Richard Demarco. The building, by then uninhabited, provided the venue for one of Davies' demonstration with explosion after DIAS, on 28 October 1966 that we retrospectively named and catalogued as 'Charles Street Event' in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive (Box 5). Haynes moved to London in 1966, where he co-founded the countercultural magazine *International Times* (known as I.T.), with Barry Miles, and also became involved with DIAS as a member of the DIAS Honorary Committee.

<sup>243</sup> I have not included here a student event in 1954 at Cardiff College of Art that Davies refers to as a 'dramaturgical performance' in his 2015 essay "Past, Present, Future / Y Gorffennol, y Presennol a'r Dyfodol", in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 92. The remaining photos of this event show Davies with fellow students jumping in the air, playing instruments, wearing chairs on their heads, and holding placards with 'Art Ball Friday' and 'Road Works Ahead' written on them in front of a painted cardboard background showing a prison.

<sup>244</sup> In a folder marked 'Total Theatre' – that I had access to during my research – Davies keeps notes from the early 1960s, around the time he arrived in Edinburgh, including, for example, a plan for 'a complete journey through theatre sensation', and for an event entitled *The Great Vaginascope Theatre operation*. The notes are roughly dated or undated, fragmentary, and would need further research to understand their relationship to the artist's practice at the time.

Davies' involvement in DIAS and experimenting with live performance and destruction art. I discuss the artist's contribution to the Ravensbourne event, and my approach to its presentation in the exhibition in 4.3.2.2.

Davies' first ever destruction art event, now catalogued as *Detonation Demonstration*,<sup>245</sup> was staged on the 24 August 1966 in a majestic ballroom in Edinburgh's Chambers Street as part of a series of musical concerts organised by the University's Women's Union. Davies' 'concert' started with separating the audience with a curtain of net wiring and arranging scaffolding pipes, stuffed with explosives and paint, on the stage. He then exploded the objects using a remote control, leaving the room covered with paint and debris and even damaging the ceiling. The following month Davies presented further 'sonic' sculptural demonstrations with explosives as part of DIAS. A week after the event at the Women's Union Davies presented what is now known as *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions*.<sup>246</sup> This event happened on 1 September 1966, during – but not as part of – the Edinburgh Festival and took place at the Territorial Army's Drill Hall on Forrest Road, following a press conference on DIAS held at the newly opened Richard Demarco Gallery on 8 Melville Crescent.<sup>247</sup> The press reported it as 'Scotland's first public demonstration of "auto-

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<sup>245</sup> Neither contemporary accounts (see newspaper cuttings in Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive) nor Kristine Stiles' 1987 PhD thesis, that first reviewed the work, mention the title of the event. Kristine Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-structured Live Art*, Volume 1-4. (PhD Diss., University of California - Berkeley, 1987), 361-362. *Detonation Demonstration* became the title of the work after a notebook entry we found in 2014 preparation for *Silent Explosion*. The work is now catalogued under this title in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. (Box 1.).

<sup>246</sup> We catalogued the work as *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions* in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive (Box 1.). Copy of the remaining film documentation is available in Box 10, while the original film (by Bill Morris) is on long-term loan at the National Sound and Screen Archive of Wales (NSSAW). This event has previously been called *Explosive Art Demonstration* in Rhodri Davies, 'I aspire to a desert- island art', *Planet* 212, 98.

<sup>247</sup> DIAS was launched by press conferences and performances in different places, which included an event on 31 August at St Bride's Institute, London (with Ralph Ortiz's *Chair Destruction* event); on 2 September at the Institute for Direct Art (Perinetgasse 1), Vienna (with Günter Brus's *Action in a Circle*, *16<sup>th</sup> Action* and Otto Mühl *Still Life with Finger*); and on 8 September at the St Bride's Institute, London (with Robin Page's *KROW-1.*) Sources: documents in Box 1. (DIAS Publications) Ivor Davies DiA Archive, and Hubert Klocker ed., *Viennese Aktionism 1960-1971*, Vol.2. (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1989), 119, 209.

destructive art.”<sup>248</sup> Although the article does not mention his name, ‘Auto-Destructive Art’ was a specific term coined by and widely associated with the work of Gustav Metzger as a result of his manifestos between 1959-1961. It is possible, however, although not confirmed by the artist, that in the context of organising Ravensbourne and DIAS Davies adopted this term to describe his own works to journalists at the time. In this event, the artist arranged on a stage found objects that he filled with explosives, including rubber boots, yoghurt pots and a toy-dog, alongside a dummy that he assembled from a painted paper anatomical figure copied from a 19<sup>th</sup> century medical booklet and the portrait print of John Bunyan, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Puritan preacher and author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* – a famous Christian allegory in which every element of the story, such as people or places, represent abstract concepts.<sup>249</sup> The figure had various objects attached to it, including a white rubber glove replacing his hand, ‘balloons filled with coloured substances symbolizing various body fluids’ (...) ‘and a clear milky substance stuffed into a long metal pipe concealed by a box for the genitalia’ (Figure 31).<sup>250</sup> The organs were also covered in golden foil and stuffed with explosives, and the whole body was then wrapped in a polyethylene. During the event Davies detonated the objects with a remote control in front of the seated audience. While some objects exploded, the dummy was only half-destroyed so Davies took its remains with him to London to be recycled in an event, now known as *Anatomic Explosions*,<sup>251</sup> that he staged in a derelict house

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<sup>248</sup> This description is from [J.K.] “New Art Form or juvenile bathos?,” *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 September 1966, n.p.

<sup>249</sup> *The Pilgrim’s Progress from this world to that which is to come* was first published in 1678. It ‘tells the story of Christian and his journey from The City of Destruction (representing earth) to the Celestial City (representing heaven).’ See *British Library Collection*, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-pilgrims-progress-by-john-bunyan>, (accessed 15 September 2016). While Bunyan’s portrait could be then interpreted retrospectively as conceptually relevant to Davies’ ideas of destruction, the artist himself explained to me that the engraving he used in the performance was an ‘arbitrary/chance/found object’ that reminded him of a ‘cavalier’. Ivor Davies, email to the author, 17 September 2017.

<sup>250</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol.2., 364.

<sup>251</sup> In preparation for *Silent Explosion* exhibition we catalogued the work as *Anatomic Explosions*. This title does not appear in contemporary accounts (see newspaper cuttings in Box 5, Ivor Davies DiA Archive) and was



on Ladbroke Grove on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1966 as part of DIAS (Figure 32). This event too consisted of timed explosions of objects that resembled the human anatomy, in this case a female shop-window dummy and the anatomical dummy he brought from Edinburgh, to which he added a large portrait print of Hollywood actor Robert Mitchum, whose style Davies tried to emulate at the time.<sup>252</sup> Although planned in detail, these sculptural destruction events were volatile due to the artist's use of explosives. This is most evident from an event planned with exploding organ pipes – also as part of DIAS – that had to be cancelled as something went wrong during preparation and the fire service had to be called.<sup>253</sup>

Davies presented *Silent Explosion*, his last event in DIAS, on 30 September 1966 at the Mercury Theatre. This event did not leave archival traces beyond the artist's written descriptions, from which it can be imagined as a very different event to the others before. For example, this work included performers other than the artist himself,<sup>254</sup> and a silent film footage of an exploding atomic bomb instead of 'real' explosions.<sup>255</sup> The visual representation of a nuclear explosion in *Silent Explosion* points to Davies' interest in the political aspect of destruction. However, comparing to the direct political activism of other artists, such as for example Gustav Metzger,<sup>256</sup> Davies' is a more voyeuristic interest in the

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referred to as *Explosions Robert Mitchum Destruction Explosion Event* in Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol.4, Figs. 230-232. From the remaining documents in the archive it seems *Anatomic Explosions* first appeared as the title on a list of works relating to the 2003 exhibition *Blast to Freeze*, although with slightly different spelling as *Anatomical Explosion*. "Packing List", *MOMART*, 23 June 2003, Ivor Davies Archival Collection, Penarth. A DVD copy of the remaining film documentation of this performance is available in Box 10 in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive, while the original film reel is on long-term loan at the NSSAW.

<sup>252</sup> The remark on Mitchum as his style-model is taken from my personal conversations with the artist, which in line with Kristine Stiles' 1987 description of 'the Hollywood actor after whose distinctive, casual, sultry style, Davies at one time constructed his own personal dress and demeanor.' Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol. 3., 559.

<sup>253</sup> Roms, *What's Welsh for Performance?*, 34. For his own detailed account of the work see Davies, "Past, Present, Future," 99-100.

<sup>254</sup> These were Susan Cahn, an American singer and composer, and a South African woman in exile called Jamela King. Davies met both women in London.

<sup>255</sup> In 2013 the artist did not remember the film part, Kristine Stiles 1987 PhD quotes Davies talking about 'a very short film of the silent explosion of an atom bomb', which would explain the title he chosen for the event. Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol. 3., 614.

<sup>256</sup> Metzger was active member of the Committee of 100 and Campaign for the Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

destructive potential of an atomic explosion as a distant horror. Such approach might be read as a reflection of his own position: as a witness to the advent of the nuclear age as it was broadcast through satellite images at the time that were at once fascinating and thrilling but also disconcerting.

In March 1967, Davies co-founded the Edinburgh Experimental Group with Ray Halsted and Graeme Farnell (all staff at Edinburgh University) and began to devise experimental theatre events, some of which he then presented at festivals throughout 1967 and 1968. These events included individual pieces such as what is now known as *Egg*,<sup>257</sup> in which a group of people were ‘born’ out of a giant painted egg-shape paper object, and as *Beach*,<sup>258</sup> a performance made for camera on Grantham Foreshore, Edinburgh, where a group of people performed around a table made from a door with leftovers from a dinner party glued to it, before setting the table on fire as it floated on water. Other performances in 1967 and 1968 were larger scale experimental theatre events, described also as ‘spectacles.’<sup>259</sup> These included *Still Life Story I-III*, performed in Durham,<sup>260</sup> Edinburgh,<sup>261</sup> and Bristol,<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Catalogued as *Egg*, Buccleuch Street, Edinburgh, 10 March 1967. (Box 7 and Box 10), the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. The original film documentation is on long term loan at NSSAW. In an interview with Heike Roms in 2006 Davies describes it as an event in “1967 or 1968, in Edinburgh.” Source Heike Roms, “Origins: Ivor Davies,” in: *What’s Welsh for Performance? An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales* (Cardiff: Trace Samizdat Press, 2008), 29.

<sup>258</sup> Catalogued as *Beach*, Grantham Foreshore, Edinburgh, 4 March 1967. (Box 5 and Box 10), the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. The original film documentation is on long term loan at NSSAW.

<sup>259</sup> Dick Wilcocks, “Multi media RAW MEAT spectacle,” *International Times* 17, (July 28 – Aug 13, 1967).

<sup>260</sup> *Experimental Theatre ’67*, Durham University Theatre, Dunelm House, 19-20 June 1967, organised by Tim Horrocks and Clare Blenkinsop. Documents relating to this event are catalogued in Box 7, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>261</sup> Part of *Edinburgh Festival*, Traverse Theatre Club, Edinburgh. According to the poster, the event was repeated on June 30 and July 5-9, 1967. However, Dick Wilcock’s review in the *International Times* (see note 252), gives the dates as July 1, 5 and 8. Documents catalogued in Box 7, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>262</sup> Part of *Mixture! An Experimental Evening of Film and Theatre* organised by artist Ian Breakwell, 16 December 1967. This event was produced without the involvement of the Edinburgh Experimental Group. Documents are catalogued in Box 8, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

and *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in Swansea.<sup>263</sup> These events comprise a different body of work in which Davies moved away from the sculptural demonstrations with explosives to explore the type of 'total theatre' that he was interested in since the early 1960s, and that he experimented with – as we can imagine from his description – previously in his 1966 *Silent Explosion*. These events relied on constructed tableaux vivants and elaborate mise-en-scène and involved a variety of performers, including professional artists, amateur performers, as well as spectators but excluded the artist himself. According to a later interview with the artist, Davies wanted to position himself outside the performance space in his works to be able to 'orchestrate' events by giving detailed instructions to the performers.<sup>264</sup> From surviving documents (photographs and cue-sheets) it seems that some actions and certain props were used repeatedly in different events, including people moving around in cardboard boxes, people wearing paper masks, and slides of art historical imagery being projected onto a variety of surfaces. In Davies' words, the Group's working method was 'purely intuitive but directed towards creating new theatrical forms' in which the 'structural and visual aspects of theatre [...] have become synonymous, i.e. the plays have a visual structure.'<sup>265</sup> This description suggests more interest in the physical, visual and sonic aspects of the theatrical spectacle than a dramatic narrative construction. After reviewing these works in the archive, I propose to consider these events as a type of happening that the writer and artist Richard Kostelanetz at the time called 'kinetic environments' and identified generally as 'closely planned [...], specifically defined and constricted [...] theatre of mixed-means', in which 'the

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<sup>263</sup> Part of *Swansea Arts Festival*, University College Swansea, organised by John Plant, 21 January 1968. Documents are catalogued in Box 9 and Box 10, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. The original film documentation is on long term loan at NSSAW.

<sup>264</sup> "A lot of performance artists placed themselves and their own bodies at the centre of the event but I wanted to be like a painter, or a theatre director or a film director, orchestrating something ...". Ivor Davies cited in Heike Roms, "Remembering Adam on St Agnes' Eve," 116.

<sup>265</sup> Manuscript letter from Ivor Davies, addressee unidentified, undated, Box 7, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

behavior of the participants (or components) is more precisely programmed' than in 'pure happenings.'<sup>266</sup>

After two years of performance activity, Davies returned to painting, drawing and etching in the late 1960s. Talking at the time about his 'retirement' from using explosives, he explained that while he felt his works in 1966 'fitted into our obsolete society which is so involved in destruction,' by 1967 there was for him 'nothing more to be achieved in destructive art,' and so he wanted 'to concentrate on something quieter.'<sup>267</sup> Reflecting on his decision in retrospect years later Davies often mentions the physical, mental, psychological and social exhaustion as a further motivating factor that made him stop working with explosives.<sup>268</sup> There is also archival evidence that the work he was making with the Edinburgh Experimental Group at the time met with difficulties at Edinburgh University and as a result the Group was banned from its premises.<sup>269</sup> Whether due to difficulties of this kind, exhaustion or declining interest in destruction, Davies gave up working with explosives in 1967, and not long after he also turned away from making performances altogether. Interestingly, while his materially radical demonstration events with explosives seemed to be primarily concerned with the sculptural aesthetic explorations of destruction, it is through

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<sup>266</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, *The Theatre of Mixed Means* (London: Pitman, 1968), 6.

<sup>267</sup> "Ivor Goes Out With A Bang," *The People*, 22 October 1967, 11.

<sup>268</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol.2., 367. See also Davies, "I aspire to a desert- island art", 102.

<sup>269</sup> The Edinburgh Experimental Group's last event was the *Festival of Experimental Arts* February 2-10, 1968, hosted by Edinburgh University and the Traverse Theatre. It included experimental music events and *Mass in F*, a happening directed by Davies and described in the Festival's programme as 'a dance piece in 13 sections', in which 'dance movements' are 'replaced by artificial forms of movement or sometimes non-movement'. A document compiled by Davies after the event describes it as including 'Goya slides, comic strip movies, Nazi propaganda films of children marching, flags and Hitler, Eisenstein's Odessa steps sequence and Pearl White car chase film'. The document also notes that the city council closed the festival down following *Mass in F*, and that the group was banned from both University premises and the Traverse and was forced to go 'underground'. The group never performed together again. All documents related to this event are in Box 10, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. It should be noted, though, that Davies himself has never referenced this event as being instrumental in his decision to cease his work in performance. For an account of the controversy surrounding *Mass in F*, see Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals*, 208-209.

working with the traditional genre of painting that Davies turned towards direct political activism in the late 1970s, when he moved back to Wales from Edinburgh and started to campaign against the destruction of the Welsh language and culture – a concern that has remained central to his practice to this day.

#### 4.1.1.2. Previous Research

While DIAS is now regarded as one of the most significant art events of the twentieth century,<sup>270</sup> Davies' participation in the symposium and his consequent performance work between 1966-1968 have yet to gain critical attention.<sup>271</sup> Two exceptions in this respect are Kristine Stiles' writings on Davies' 1966 performances as part of her research on the histories of *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, and Heike Roms' work around the history and historiography of Davies' performance practice, particularly his 1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, as part of her oral history exploration of performance art in a Welsh context. Both scholars are influential and pioneering in their approach to writing the histories of post avant-garde performance art in the fields of art history and performance studies. I will now discuss their work to show how they contributed to generating the histories of Davies' 1960s performances before the time of my research.

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<sup>270</sup> Key authors who have written extensively about DIAS include Kristine Stiles, Ross Birrell, Kerry Brougher, Justin Hoffmann, Stewart Home, and Andrew Wilson. Key survey exhibitions that included archival material from DIAS include *Out of Actions*, Los Angeles, 1998; *Art & The 60s: This Was Tomorrow*, London, 2004; *Art Under Attack*, London, 2013; and *Damage Control*, Washington, 2014. For a more detailed list of key publications and exhibitions regarding DIAS see my annotations in Judit Bodor, "Ivor Davies Destruction in Art (DiA) Archive," in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 2-3 (Insert).

<sup>271</sup> In general descriptions of DIAS, Davies' name is often left out from the list of participating artists. See for example "Gustav Metzger. DIAS," *Medienkunstnetz.de*, <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/dias/> accessed 12 June 2015. On Wikipedia Davies is even listed amongst those artists "who are said to have participated in absentia." See "Destruction in Art Symposium," *Wikipedia.org*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destruction\\_in\\_Art\\_Symposium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Destruction_in_Art_Symposium) (accessed 25 June 2017).

#### 4.1.1.2.1. Kristine Stiles, 1981 and 2005

My doctoral research in Davies' archive was preceded by that of Kristine Stiles, who between 1983 and 1986 prepared her – yet unpublished – PhD thesis on DIAS.<sup>272</sup> As part of this research, Stiles wrote about the artist's career from the 1950s to the point of his contribution to DIAS, drawing in her analysis on many of the press cuttings I would later also find in his archival collection. In addition, she conducted interviews with Davies around 1982-83, which were published in the Welsh art magazine *Link* alongside extracts from her thesis, in a special issue edited by Davies himself to mark the twentieth anniversary of DIAS.<sup>273</sup> While Stiles subjects Davies' works to a predominantly art-historical and descriptive treatment, there are some critical observations in the thesis which she later repeated in her 2005 essay, 'The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the "DIAS affect"'.<sup>274</sup> In her analysis of Davies' first demonstrations with explosions in September 1966, and based on Davies' own explanations of his motivations at the time, Stiles for example proposes that while Davies' works were 'politically suggestive' they were socially critical in a 'metaphorical' sense rather than motivated by political activism.<sup>275</sup> She supports this observation by noting that Davies worked with the permission of authorities in his event at the Territorial Army Drill Hall on 1 September 1966,<sup>276</sup> and that DIAS as a whole happened in a historic moment before 'public animosity linked aesthetic activities with socially critical politics'.<sup>277</sup> Excerpts reproduced

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<sup>272</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, 1987. I have accessed a copy of this unpublished PhD thesis in Davies' archival collection.

<sup>273</sup> Stiles explained her research around Davies' work to me in personal conversations during 2016. Kristine Stiles, "Ivor Davies in Discussion with Kristine Stiles," *Link* 52 (1987): 9-10. A revised version of the 1987 interview was published in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 156-162.

<sup>274</sup> Kristine Stiles, "The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the 'DIAS affect'," in *Gustav Metzger. History History / Geschichte Geschichte*, ed. Sabine Breitweiser (Vienna & Ostfildern-Ruit: Generali Foundation and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 41-65.

<sup>275</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol.3., 364.

<sup>276</sup> Stiles here refers to a Letter (of Liability) from Richard Demarco, 1966, catalogued in Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>277</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol., 363.

from Stiles' thesis in *Link 52* and selected by the artist himself – and, presumably thus of importance from the artist's point of view – show how Stiles categorises the artist's work in the context of DIAS. She lists Davies' name alongside the Brazilian Pro Diaz, the German Werner Schreib and the English John Latham as being concerned with 'the [physical] destruction of matter,' and differentiates this group from those who 'worked primarily with their body as a vehicle for communicating the psychological effects of destruction and violence' (such as the Viennese Actionists, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Raphael Montañez Ortiz, Al Hansen and Yoko Ono), and those who 'marshalled the natural forces of destruction wrought by wind, fire, rain, air and water' (such as Barry Flanagan, Graham Stevens and Juan Hidalgo).<sup>278</sup> In another excerpt, Stiles discusses a 1967 demonstration by Davies,<sup>279</sup> in which he 'destroyed mannequins in a shop window in Edinburgh blowing out the window in the process', and goes on to argue that this was an example for how destruction art brought 'the destructive potential indirectly experienced through the media directly into the lives of people who experienced these works', which eventually resulted in a shift in art from 'metaphorical' to 'metonymic' communication.<sup>280</sup>

Stiles discusses Davies' work once more in her 2005 'The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium and the "DIAS affect," an essay written for the catalogue of the *Gustav Metzger: Geschichte Geschichte / History History* exhibition at Generali Foundation, Vienna. In this text Stiles notes the significant changes in the reception history of DIAS, comparing the present interest in the event in exhibitions and publications to the time of her doctoral research in the 1980s, when artists still felt that they 'had "failed" because they had not

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<sup>278</sup> Stiles, *Ivor Davies in discussion*, 6.

<sup>279</sup> The work she discusses here is most possibly *Charles Street Event*, 28 October 1966, Box 5, Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>280</sup> Stiles, *Ivor Davies in discussion*, 8.

changed society'<sup>281</sup> and scholars actively objected to the inclusion of radical art forms (such as happening, Fluxus, Wiener Aktionismus and destruction art) in mainstream art histories. It is however this increased interest that provided an opportunity also for Stiles to publish key findings in a revised form. In the 2005 essay she stands by her observation made in the 1980s that DIAS was a symptom of its time; however, she also argues that the event remained significant over time as it generates 'mental states that lead to social and cultural changes'<sup>282</sup> which can be detected to this day in contemporary art.

It is in the context of this 'DIAS affect' that she describes the works of San Francisco-based group Survival Research Laboratories (SRL) in the 1980s as a hybrid aesthetic that connects Metzger's 'use of destruction to launch a critique of totalitarianism and capitalism'<sup>283</sup> with the formal aesthetics of Davies' early demonstrations with explosives. However, she also points out that while Davies' 1960s works with explosives might have been a formal-visual precedent to SLR's 'robotic displays of explosive mayhem and destruction parodying military practices',<sup>284</sup> the very different political circumstances of the 1980s in the United States forced SLR to go underground, whilst Davies' could present his works as very public spectacles. While Stiles' argument of Davies' sculptural demonstrations being precedents for the 'dangerous machines'<sup>285</sup> of the SLR might be a point of debate, her approach allows for a consideration of the influence of DIAS within a geographically and

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<sup>281</sup> Stiles, "The Story of the Destruction in Art Symposium," 53.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>285</sup> Survival Research Laboratories (or SRL) is a machine performance art group led by Mark Pauline and active in California since 1978. For a recent interview-based essay on Mark Pauline and SLR, see Jesse Hicks, "Terrorism as Art: Mark Pauline's Dangerous Machines. Robots, Rebellion, and the post-apocalyptic performance art of Survival Research Labs," *The Verge*, 9 October 2012 <https://www.theverge.com/2012/10/9/3408030/mark-pauline-spine-robot-machines-robots-terrorism-as-art> (accessed 15 April 2016).



temporally expanded context. Furthermore, her analysis of Davies' works and the international histories of destruction art in the 1980s was pioneering not only as it discussed destruction art as significant in the histories of post-war performance art, but also because in doing so she promoted performance art within mainstream art histories. As such Stiles' research bridges a gap in scholarship between RoseLee Goldberg's 1979 history of performance<sup>286</sup> and the emergence of other performance art histories in the 1990s.<sup>287</sup> While Stiles' more recent publication on destruction art<sup>288</sup> omitted Davies from her analysis of DIAS, her 1980s research (and resulting thesis), and her passing remarks in the cited publications provided the most detailed historical-critical analysis of Davies' performances until the publication accompanying *Silent Explosion* in 2015.

#### **4.1.1.2.2. Heike Roms, 2004ff.**

The second example of significant research into Davies' 1960s performances is Heike Roms' performance historiography project, *What's Welsh for Performance? / Beth yw 'performance' yn Gymraeg?*.<sup>289</sup> Roms' work has most importantly focused on Davies' 1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* – a work that did not feature in Stiles' research as it was not directly connected with DIAS – as one of the earliest (known) example of performance art in Wales. Roms' overall aim with the project has been to make the histories of little known or forgotten

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<sup>286</sup> RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1979).

<sup>287</sup> Examples of performance art survey publications in the 1990s include John Gray, *Action Art: A Bibliography of Artists' Performance from Futurism to Fluxus and Beyond* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993); Michael Huxley, and Noel Witts eds., *The Twentieth Century Performance Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Kristine Stiles, "Performance," in *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, eds. Kristine Stiles, and Peter Selz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Tracey Warr, and Amelia Jones eds., *The Artist's Body* (London: Phaidon, 2000) [including a survey essay by Amelia Jones entitled "Body/Splits"].

<sup>288</sup> Kristine Stiles, "Survival Ethos and Destruction Art," in *Concerning Consequences: Studies in Art, Destruction and Trauma* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 29-47.

<sup>289</sup> This project was initiated in 2005 and aimed to compile a comprehensive record of performance art in Wales during the latter part of the twentieth century.

historical events publicly accessible and available for interpretation through ‘uncovering’<sup>290</sup> their archives, including documents and memories.<sup>291</sup>

In her consequent writings based upon this research,<sup>292</sup> Roms reflects on her historiographic method of using oral history to explore the nature and reliability of both archival document and witness recollection as ‘evidence’ for past events. Furthermore, Roms uses these writings to emphasise her own role as researcher/archivist in constructing an archive of performance art as part of the process of creating and interpreting evidence. She argues that ‘the capacity of documents to serve as evidence is not inherent within them, but derives from acts that identify and construct them as such – the processes whereby it is selected, classified and presented, or, as archivists might put it, appraised, described and recorded – and such acts include the labour of the archivist.’<sup>293</sup> Roms’ interviews aim to create ‘access points’ to the archive of historical performances (understood as both tangible

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<sup>290</sup> Heike Roms, “Eventful evidence: Historicizing Performance Art,” *Maska* 117–118 (Autumn 2008): 69–77. Also available on *Perfomap.de*, n.p., <http://www.perfomap.de/map2/geschichte/romsengl> (accessed 23 January 2016).

<sup>291</sup> Roms recorded over fifty interviews with artists and eye-witnesses, produced over 5000 archival records made accessible through an online database ([www.performance-wales.org](http://www.performance-wales.org)), and generated further material from organising publicly staged oral history events. “What’s Welsh for Performance”, *Aber.ac.uk*, <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/excellence/impact/welsh-performance/> (accessed 17 April 2017).

<sup>292</sup> Roms’ research project resulted in numerous publications between 2004 and 2011 that included a discussion of Ivor Davies’ works, amongst them are “An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales: In conversation with Ivor Davies” [video recording], (*What’s Welsh for Performance?* (Aberystwyth University) archive, 2006); “Remembering Performance - Heike Roms in conversation with Ivor Davies,” *Plattform*, (August 2007): 13–17; *What’s Welsh for Performance?: An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales* (Cardiff: Trace Samizdat Press, 2008); “Eventful Evidence: Historicizing Performance Art,” *Maska* 117–118 (Autumn 2008): 69–77; “Destruction in Art. Interviewee: Ivor Davies,” *An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales - Hanes Llafar Celfyddyd Perfformio yng Nghymru*, 2009, [http://www.performance-wales.org/it-was-40-years-ago-today/interviews/40\\_Davies.htm](http://www.performance-wales.org/it-was-40-years-ago-today/interviews/40_Davies.htm); *In Conversation with Ivor Davies’ ICA London*, [video recording], (London: British Library Sound and Moving Image archive, 2010); “Archiving Legacies: Who Cares for Performance Remains?,” in *Performing Archives/ Archives of Performance*, eds. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (University of Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), 35–52; “Remembering Adam on St Agnes’ Eve,” in Roms *Silent Explosion*, 112–121; “Mind the Gaps: Evidencing Performance and Performing Evidence in Performance Art History,” in *Theatre History and Historiography: Ethics, Evidence and Truth*, eds. Claire Cochrane and Joanna Robinson, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 163–181.

<sup>293</sup> Roms, *Eventful Evidence*, 2008, n.p.

and intangible materiality), through which secondary audiences can gain insight into ‘what happened, or possibly what we imagine may have happened,’ whilst proposing that the evidence in the case of performance art is always constructed between the witnesses of events and those who later take care of the archive.<sup>294</sup> As Roms notes, whilst the capacity of visual documentation ‘to act as record’ has long been questioned, her interviews proved a similar unreliability in the witness recollections when artists ‘[did] not remember or remembered differently certain details of their past work that [were] shown by the documents.’<sup>295</sup> Roms’ positioning of the ‘carertakers’ of an artist’s archive – whether it be the artist him/herself, his/her estate, or an archivist, researcher or curator – as important to the documenting, evidencing and disseminating of the histories of performance art was particularly relevant to my research as co-curator of *Silent Explosion*, in which my tasks involved cataloguing and arranging the archive for exhibition purposes. Roms’ performative approach to historiography also served as a model for my research. It can be considered both an example for what has been discussed above as ‘the curatorial’ (i.e. as a [discursive] ‘mode of knowledge production’<sup>296</sup>) and as an example of ‘the repertoire,’<sup>297</sup> Diana Taylor’s already discussed term for the embodied archival act of remembering. Another particularly relevant element in Roms’ research – and in many ways providing the basis for my curatorial work – is her identification of the unique position of Davies’ 1968 *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve* within the early history of performance art in Wales, which became an important factor for presenting the work as key example of the artist’s performance practice in the 2015 retrospective at National Museum Cardiff.

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Rogoff and Bismarck, “A conversation,” 26.

<sup>297</sup> Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire*, 2003.

#### 4.1.1.3. Exhibitions of Davies' Destruction in Art archival collection, from 2002 onwards

The exhibition histories of Davies' 1960s performance works have also been important reference points for my curatorial research. The artist's archival collection relating to DIAS and to his own works did not appear in exhibitions until *Blast to Freeze: British Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* in 2002/2003 (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg September 14, 2002 - January 19, 2003 and Les Abattoirs, Toulouse February 24 - May 11, 2003 curated by Gijs van Tuyl and Henry Meyric Hughes). This exhibition was a survey show of British art, covering the twentieth century between *Blast*, the Vorticist's magazine first published in 1914, and *Freeze*, the Young British Artists' show in London Docklands in 1988. According to a description sent to Davies by Gijs van Tuyl in 2003, both events 'marked a new point of departure [in art] and placed the media at the heart of their strategy for self-promotion.'<sup>298</sup> The curators' aim – as the description goes on – was to review British art outside Britain for the first time in almost two decades, and in response to a new interest internationally in British Art following to the extension of Tate Britain and the opening of Tate Modern in 2000-2001.<sup>299</sup> The intent was to provide a 'broadly chronological display, to evoke some of the periodic bursts of creativity' by showing examples of key works 'selected for their visual strength and historical significance' alongside the partial recreations of significant exhibitions.<sup>300</sup> The description lists key artists and events presented without mentioning DIAS, and the catalogue does not list Davies as exhibiting artist. This suggests that the archival documents loaned from Davies were considered as contextual archival material and Davies as a collector. I have not been able to locate visual documentation of the exhibition, but I am drawing here on Davies' own

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<sup>298</sup> *Blast to Freeze. British Art in the Age of Extremes*, exhibition concept, Ivor Davies Archival Collection, Penarth.

<sup>299</sup> Ivor Davies, email to the author, 14 November 2016.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

description. In an email on 14 November 2016 Davies described the display in the exhibition as an approximately 5x6 meters space, where he fixed original photographs of his *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions* and *Anatomic Explosions* to the concrete wall, and presented documents from his DIAS collection in a standing vitrine with 'copper-plate font handwriting on paper labels'.<sup>301</sup> This description suggests that, while the display applied the tropes of a standard documentary presentation, the particular mode of presenting the photographs, and the handwritten labels, introduced a different kind of aesthetic from that which is prevalent in museum interpretation. Davies' approach to presenting his archive makes the artist present through the mode of display as a collector, who seem to be less concerned with protection or preservation than a museum archivist, and who has a desire to interpret historical documents from a personal point of view. Davies' choice of using handwriting on the labels stands for a collector's 'signature,' through which the presentation of the archival material in the exhibition is authorised.

A section on DIAS, with documents loaned from Davies, featured also in Tate's 2004 exhibition, *Art & the 60s: This Was Tomorrow* (June 30 – September 26, 2004, Tate Britain, London, curated by Chris Stephens and Catherine Stout). According to a list of loaned documents in Davies' archive, the artist proposed forty items to the curators to display, including 'Film footage of performances by Ivor Davies.'<sup>302</sup> In 2016<sup>303</sup> Davies remembered presenting a 'loop-film' of *Anatomic Explosion* on 'tape' as produced by

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> On the typed version of the exhibition list there is no specification of what this film footage was, but there is a handwritten note by the artist (with no date) added to the list at some point describing them as *Prelude to Anatomical Explosion, Edinburgh* and *Untitled Anatomical Explosion, London*. "List of loans relating to the Destruction in Art Symposium," *Tate Britain*, c.2004-5. Ivor Davies Archival Collection, Penarth.

<sup>303</sup> Ivor Davies, email to author, 14 November 2016.

documentary film maker Pete Telfer.<sup>304</sup> While not wishing to dispute the artist's recollection, another list in the archive, attached to a letter sent on 9 August 2005 from curator Catherine Stout to Davies, makes it difficult to ascertain with certainty what might have been actually selected for exhibition from Davies' initial list. The letter is asking for permission from the artist to extend his loan for touring the exhibition in Australia. The loan list attached to the letter details what the museum has in their possession. On this list, however, only sixteen documents from Davies' proposed forty are marked as being 'on display at Tate Britain (and touring to Birmingham)', with the rest marked as 'returned', 'yet to be returned', or, in the case of the films of Davies' performances, as 'Items not received by Tate'. On another copy of the list in Davies' archive, the two films are marked as 'dropped.'<sup>305</sup>

In 2006, Davies had a solo retrospective in Brno (Moravská Galerie, 17 March – 28 May 2006, curated by Marek Pokorný) as part of 'It's Wales', a British Council-supported series of exhibitions organised with support from Wales Arts International. In the small

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<sup>304</sup> Davies' term is generic and probably refers to one of the DVD copies that are now on long-term loan at NSSAW. As Pete Telfer remembers the original 16 mm film have been transferred first in 1992 onto Beta SP tape using the Telecine facility at BBC Wales the BBC Wales Arts series *The Slate*. Later he copied the film (and all other film footage remaining from Davies' 1960s performances) onto DVC from which he made several DVD copies over the years for the artist's request. Two copies of the same DVD have been deposited by Davies at NSSAW are labelled as 'Ivor Davies D.I.A.S. / Anatomic Explosion'. The run time of the film footage is 3 minutes and 24 seconds, but the footage freezes at the end and then repeats, endlessly. Iola Baines, "Ifor Davies – DVDs brief viewing notes for Judit", email to the author, 25 August 2017; and Pete Telfer, email to the author, 30 August 2017.

<sup>305</sup> Catherine Stout, letter and list of loans to Ivor Davies, 9 August 2005, Ivor Davies Archival Collection, Penarth. I contacted Tate to access photographs of the exhibition that would provide visual information on how the archival material was exhibited, but Tate was unable to locate any visual documentation of the exhibition at the time. See William Swainger (Rights & Sales Executive, Tate), email to the author, 30 June 2017. I also contacted the artist again, who confirmed that the films were exhibited at the Tate and in Birmingham but could not recollect whether they travelled to Australia. Ivor Davies, email to the author, 17 September 2017.

bilingual catalogue<sup>306</sup> the paintings are presented with added handwritten notes by the artist. On the back cover, and in the centre of the publication – thus framing the images of paintings – are digitally manipulated reproductions of two photographs of Davies’ *Anatomic Explosions* as appeared in *Life Magazine*, 17 February 1967 (Figure 33). The centre spread is composed of two separate photographs alongside each other which have been digitally manipulated and purposefully pixelated (Figure 34). On the left, Davies is seen standing in a doorframe of a house which is also then seen on the right at a moment of explosion. This visual arrangement and composition<sup>307</sup> create an image that encourages a reading of *Anatomic Explosions* as a metaphoric destruction of the artist’s body. However, Davies himself has explained that his presence was initially only intended to set up the explosion as a sculptural event than to become the central performer.

The photos of the event were taken by a photographer called Tom Picton, who photographed a lot of DIAS and sold images as a freelancer to *Time Life* magazine, including a number of pictures of me. When I was going to go through the window of this house in order to carefully set up a car battery with explosives he asked me to stay there a minute. That wasn’t the part of the event at all but I realise now, afterwards, that this became a central part of the event. Picton put me in the window and there was an explosion the next minute and in the photos it looks though I’d exploded. Despite my attitudes I became thereby an active part in the visible side of the performance. But I was delighted because in that instance it worked well.<sup>308</sup>

It is clear from Davies’ description that the image of him standing in the doorway that has become so central to his understanding of the work only happened due to the photographer’s request to pose for a picture before the explosion demonstration began. However serendipitous, Davies now aligns his understanding of *Anatomic Explosions* with this most recent image and remarks that the photograph has become part of the work.<sup>309</sup> Although the

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<sup>306</sup> *Ivor Davies* (Brno: Moravská Galerie, 2006). The catalogue was published in English and Czech, except the title of the works in Welsh and English.

<sup>307</sup> I couldn’t find out from the artist who made the collage-image, but the publication – as he remembers – was being designed ‘in house by a young designer’. Ivor Davies, email to the author 17 September 2017.

<sup>308</sup> Roms, “Origins,” 26.

<sup>309</sup> Davies also attributes the photograph to Tom Picton, a well-known photographer of DIAS and not to Michael Broom. Personal conversations with the artist during the research.

catalogue reproduction creates an impression distinct from the actuality of the event, the work is arguably stronger for it. The highly stylised and aesthetically manipulated appearance produces a resolved version of the artwork in formal and conceptual terms. This is a good example of how performance art lives on ‘differently’ as archive through continuous proliferation and reinterpretations, when each re-presentation is unique, but none can be considered as ‘original.’ Michael Broom’s photographs of *Anatomic Explosions* changed the perception of the event comparing to what the artist intended, while the presentation of the photograph in 2006 added to its mythology. This process supports the idea that the ‘legacy’ of artworks, in fact, is – as Heike Roms describes – ‘[A]n archive constituted through a continual performance of collaborative practices of care.’<sup>310</sup>

The curator, Marek Pokorný’s ‘prologue’ in the publication briefly contextualises the exhibition and discusses Davies for the first time in an exhibition context as ‘one of the prime movers of DIAS.’<sup>311</sup> The exhibition is also interesting from the perspective of introducing destruction as a central theme in Davies’ practice across media (paintings and performance). While this approach can perhaps be considered as a precedent to the 2015 *Silent Explosion*, the Brno exhibition is also significantly different from the one at National Museum Cardiff, as it still presented Davies’ performance practice as marginal comparing to his practice as a painter by allocating only one room to show these works’ film documentation – without any other archival material – and separating the film documentation of events from art objects (Figure 35).<sup>312</sup> In his email on 14 November 2016 Davies explained to me that he worked

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<sup>310</sup> Roms, “Archiving Legacies,” 48.

<sup>311</sup> Marek Pokorný, “Prologue to ID,” in *Ivor Davies* (Brno: Moravská Galerie, 2006), n.p.

<sup>312</sup> My analysis is based on the remaining photo documentation of the exhibition deposited at NSSAW (CD-Rom labelled as ‘Ivor Davies / MG’) that I accessed with the artist’s permission.



with Pete Telfer again, who transferred all the remaining film footage of Davies' performances from 8 and 16 mm reels onto 'tape' in non-consecutive order, running on a loop and without titles. In the email, Davies remarks that this loop-version was made without his involvement and consists of a different sequence of events to the one he remembers.<sup>313</sup> He also mentions that some parts of the films had been cut and extracted from their original position in the early days after the events were not corrected during the transfer.<sup>314</sup> This description further evidences how performance art 'mutates' over time through editing and recirculation of 'original' documentation, which can then influence the narratives around the work and changes its material appearance. Upon research at the National Screen and Sound Archive (NSSAW), further proliferation can be evidenced from the four DVDs that include all remaining film footage of Davies' performances, but with a different running time varying between 19 minutes and 30 seconds and 22 minutes and 35 seconds. Curiously, the DVD labelled as 'edited' is also longer than DVD labelled as 'unedited.'<sup>315</sup> While it is difficult to figure out in retrospect how the original film footage has been edited over time,<sup>316</sup> the existence of different versions of the films transferred from 16 and 8 mm film reel onto SP tape, DVC, and DVDs in the hands of people who care for the archive, further supports the

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<sup>313</sup> Ivor Davies, email to the author 14 November 2016. It is unclear what Davies' meant by 'tape' (VHS or digital format), and the artist did not specify it in further correspondence. From further correspondence with Iola Baines (NSSAW), and Peter Telfer, it is also unclear where this 'loop-tape' is now. Amongst the documents (VHS and DVD copies from the 1990s onwards) that are on long-term loan at NSSAW none matches Davies' description (of including all the films on loop). Email correspondence with Iola Baines, 29 August 2017, and with Peter Telfer, 30 August 2017.

<sup>314</sup> It seems that the film documentation included in the Brno exhibition (and that is not on loan at NSSAW) was amongst the DVD copies that Pete Telfer made from the DVC copy of the SP tape made in 1992 from the original film footage. See also Note 295 in this thesis. As Telfer recalls, in 1992 the original (1960s) film reels were 'in very poor condition and literally fell apart as it was transferring – the tape holding the film together the edits had degraded. The TK [telecine] technician was able to remake the edits and save the original film.' Pete Telfer, email to the author, 30 August 2017.

<sup>315</sup> Iola Baines, email to the author, 25 August 2017.

<sup>316</sup> All film footages deposited to NSSAW are currently catalogued and were therefore inaccessible in Davies' archive throughout my research. To my question about any visible signs of editing of the original film reels, Iola Baines explained that while the artist confirmed that bits were cut out of the films, he cannot recall any detail of what these bits were. The technical team will need 'to look for editing clues such as aged splicing tape' on the film reels to find out more. Source: Iola Baines, email to the author, 20 June 2017.

idea of performance as a ‘viral ontology’ and ‘an aesthetics of change’ (see Chapter 2).

In 2011, Davies’ 1960s performances were introduced for the first time to a wider audience in Wales as part of the inaugural exhibition of the National Museum Cardiff’s new contemporary galleries. The exhibition, entitled *Ni allaf ddianc rhag hon (I Cannot Escape This Place)*<sup>317</sup> was curated by Nicholas Thornton, and presented key artworks by modern and contemporary Welsh and British artists. The sub-theme of the display in Gallery 22 – where Davies’ work was exhibited – was performance art practices. For this exhibition Thornton chose Davies’ 1968 *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve*, a multimedia experimental theatre event that Heike Roms’ research confirmed as one of the earliest known examples of performance art in Wales. With help from the museum, Davies prepared a digital version of the existing film documentation originally shot on 16 mm by Alan Brooks, a member of staff at Swansea University College in 1968.<sup>318</sup> As Davies explained to me in 2015, the film in 2011 was also ‘very successfully implanted’ with stills taken at Swansea by Brooks’ colleague, Stephen Hibbs, and inserted into the film by Chris Hardwick, AV Technician at the Museum to fill the gaps in the film’s sequence.<sup>319</sup> The c. 6-minutes black and white footage shows part of the event that lasted over 30 minutes in 1968 and included a carefully structured mix of staged actions, music, lighting and explosions. The DVD collage of film and stills (produced by Hardwick) was presented in 2011 as a loop-film, on a black box monitor, alongside framed ephemera that Davies associated with the performance, including a cue sheet, a brown paper

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<sup>317</sup> I haven’t been able to find out the exact dates of this exhibition and the curator was only able to estimate it between July 2011 – January 2012. Nicholas Thornton, email to the author, 6 September 2017.

<sup>318</sup> The 16-mm film reel is on long-term loan at NSSAW, labelled as ‘Swansea Destructivist Performance’ / John Scott.’ This label was on the outside of the can, but it is not clear who John Scott is. The Archive has not kept the original canister. Source: Iola Baines, “Ivor Davies – reel numbers and temp titles with FOOTAGE”, email attachment sent to the author, 25 August 2017.

<sup>319</sup> Ivor Davies, email to the author, 31 May 2015. According to Iola Baines, the 2011 film-collage has not been deposited to NSSAW. Iola Baines, email to the author, 25 August 2017.

bag mask and a white collaged paper mask (Figure 36). The wall-label accompanying this group of objects read as follows:

Ivor Davies (b.1935)  
Film and archival material from performance *Adam on St. Agnes' Eve* 1968,  
8 mm film transferred to DVD, paper bags, ink and pencil on paper

According to Nicholas Thornton, the text for the wall-label, as well as the selection of documents was given to him by the artist. He then suggested the mode of display with which Davies' agreed.<sup>320</sup>

As it appears, the wall-label only mentions the artist who conceived the work in 1967-68, but not the documenters of the event on 21 January 1968 (Alan Brooks and Stephen Hibbs), or the creator of the 2011 digital montage (Chris Hardwick). While interpreting the archive under the singular authorship of Davies aligns with museum conventions, the issue, as new media scholar Jon Ippolito argues, is that 'the innocuous-looking wall label – featuring a single artist, title, date, medium, dimension, and collection – represents a cultural paradigm based on singularity and stasis rather than multiplicity and movement. The most dynamic art of the past half-century will die if this paradigm isn't overturned.'<sup>321</sup> The display in 2011 erased the sense of the *Adam on St' Agnes' Eve* as multimedia, collaboratively produced and participatory event, as well as the multiple authorship that is present in the work's afterlives as archive. Instead, it presented the material archive as art objects under the singular authorship of the artist and framed them as the 'unique' remains of an event that has passed. In actuality, the DVD montage on display only partially connected with both *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* as a historical event, and the 'original' documentation by Brooks and Hibbs. From researching Davies' archive in 2015 it became also apparent to me that the 2011 wall

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<sup>320</sup> I had several conversations with the curator regarding this exhibition during my research.

<sup>321</sup> Jon Ippolito, "Death by Wall Label," *Vectors Journal*, 2017, n.p., <http://vectors.usc.edu/thoughtmesh/publish/11.php?collaboration> (accessed on 14 April 2016).

label was factually incorrect about the objects on display; the original film (transferred to DVD in the exhibition) was 16 mm, and the white paper-bag collaged mask (framed on the wall) was made by participants of *Still Life Story III* (Bristol, 16 December 1967), an event that preceded *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*.<sup>322</sup>

Finally, there were two further exhibitions in 2013, both of which I saw in person, which included archival documents from Davies' destruction art works. *Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm* (Tate Britain, 2 October 2013 – 5 January 2014; curated by Tabitha Barber, Dr Stacy Boldrick, Dr Ruth Kenny and Sofia Karamani) loaned items from Davies' collection for a room-size display dedicated to DIAS. *Exploding Utopia*, a group exhibition curated by art historian Rozemin Keshvani at the Laure Genillard Gallery (28 September - 21 December 2013), was dedicated to artists who 'produced works which inhabit unstable realities, embrace ambiguity, interrogate sculptural process and kinetic possibilities to uncover unrealised potentialities and engage unforeseen possible worlds.'<sup>323</sup> This exhibition included a selection of photographs of Davies' 1966 *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions* presented in a frame alongside a 1966 letter from gallerist and art impresario Richard Demarco to the artist.<sup>324</sup>

As in all the other exhibitions discussed above, *Art Under Attack* presented DIAS through a selection of by now 'iconic' and repeatedly exhibited documents, including photographs by Tom Picton, the DIAS poster designed by John Sharkey, documents relating

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<sup>322</sup> Documents relating to 'Still Life Story III,' including seven white paper masks one of which was on display in 2011 are now catalogued in Box 8, The Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>323</sup> Rozemin Keshvani, *Exploding Utopia*, (London: Laure Genillard Gallery, 2013), 15.

<sup>324</sup> In his email of 14 November 2016 Davies also mentions two more exhibitions that included his works: at the National Eisteddfod Newport, and in Zagreb, curated by Alex Farquharson; however, I was unable to gather more information about these exhibitions.

to the scheduled programme of the three-day symposium published by the DIAS Committee and some ephemera relating to those artists whose works are now in public collections, including Gustav Metzger, Yoko Ono and Raphael Montañez Ortiz. Furthermore, both exhibitions present historical performances according to the media of their extant archival material, showing photographs and other paper documents in frames and vitrines, and relics (such as a newly found ‘original’ fragment of Ortiz’s *Piano Destruction Concert* ‘thought to be destroyed during the seminal Destruction In Art Symposium (DIAS) in 1966’<sup>325</sup>) as unique art objects; a format that follows the template first established in *Out of Actions* in 1998 for the exhibition of historical performance art (see Chapter 2). These, and all other exhibitions that included material from Davies’ archive suggests the dominance of an object-centred approach that emphasises the collection (archival material and relics), rather than the works identity and experience as events. This is despite museums’ increasing desire and capacity to collect and present performance as ‘live’ art, and the widespread availability of contemporary curatorial approaches through which the complex relationship between event and object can be addressed (see Chapter 2 and 3).

A common feature among the exhibitions of DIAS is that this international meeting is often interpreted through selected artworks by very few artists, and as an event organised single-handedly by Gustav Metzger. While it is certainly true that Metzger was a key figure as the initiator and main force behind DIAS, the exhibitions simplify the story by leaving out any material that would show the event as a communal effort that the organisation of such a large-scale international event in the 1960s would have required, leaving for example the role and activities of the Honorary Committee largely unexplored and underexposed. While

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<sup>325</sup> The press release to the exhibition describes this ‘original’ fragment as the highlight of the exhibition. Source “Axed piano from seminal 1960s art event rediscovered and on show in public at Tate Britain for the first time”, *Tate.org*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/art-under-attack-histories-british-iconoclasm-1> (accessed 20 February 2016).

perhaps not all members of the Committee were active, that the event was the result of people working together seems apparent from my archival research. In an interview I found in the *Archives of American Art*,<sup>326</sup> for example, Al Hansen (a US participant in DIAS) explains that Mario Amaya<sup>327</sup> (member of the Committee) visited Dick Higgins' house on West 22 Street New York (where at the time Hansen ran the Something Else Press Gallery) and asked for suggestions for artists to invite to DIAS from the US. Hansen then explains that:

[...] one of the things that made the destruction in art symposium a success was that my book had been published, and [...] it listed [...] many people who did that sort of thing, and it also listed a lot more people with their address, so you could write to them and ask them what they did. [...] Well, Mario [phonetic] used my book to get more people to come [...] And I said he should ask each person to find three, so it would be a pyramid club thing. So, the destruction in art symposium in London, in the fall of 1966, which they call Dyas [phonetic], became, really, like a huge party meeting of – everyone had been doing Happenings and actions, along with everyone – many people were into concrete poetry.<sup>328</sup>

This interview shows that the event was organised by word of mouth, and because of meetings between different people in different places, rather than by Metzger from London. In the same way that Al Hansen or Mario Amaya tend to be absent from exhibitions of DIAS, so does Davies' contribution remain largely unrecognised. As apparent from my review of exhibitions, until 2013 Davies had been mostly included in these exhibitions as a collector due to the significance of his unique, and large, collection of DIAS-related documents, but gained relatively little attention from curators as either co-organiser or participant.

Regarding those exhibitions where Davies' works feature, it seems that in most cases

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<sup>326</sup> Paul Cummings, "Oral History Interview with Al Hansen, 1973 November 6-13," *Archives of American Art*, <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-al-hansen-12668> (accessed 20 January 2015).

<sup>327</sup> Transcribed mistakenly as Mario 'Meyer'. Cummings, "Oral History Interview with Al Hansen," n.p.

<sup>328</sup> Excerpts from Cummings, "Oral History Interview with Al Hansen," n.p.

it was the artist who decided on what should be presented, while the curators decided on the mode of display.<sup>329</sup> According to Rozemin Keshvani, the curator of *Exploding Utopia*, the “[C]uratorial process in Ivor’s case is very much controlled by the artist. He is politically astute and both himself a curator and art historian in addition to being an artist.”<sup>330</sup> However, through the close analysis of exhibitions, it is also apparent that – as the main interpreter of his works – the artist’s interpretation changes according to his (changing) memories, often influenced by the remaining documentation and intentions. It is also apparent that the performances’ titles changed since their conception, which has been confusing for curators. An example for this is *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions* (1 September, Edinburgh), which featured in the 2013 *Exploding Utopia* through photographs. The publication accompanying the exhibition suggests that the photographs relate to two performances, including also *Anatomic Explosions*, an event that happened two weeks later, on 13 September 1966, London.<sup>331</sup> In response to my question about the captions in the publication, the curator explained that at the time of the exhibition Davies could not remember the titles of his 1960s performances but that ‘it was an evolving landscape’ and that ‘[A]t times, I recall him telling me there were no set titles, but then later he explained this Edinburgh piece was a prelude.’<sup>332</sup> Keshvani also commented that part of her uncertainty about titles was that she did not know enough about Davies’ performances before the exhibition to be able to identify them from the photographs, and given these works’ description elsewhere, she needed to rely entirely on the information provided by Davies. She concluded her experience as one that shows that [T]he

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<sup>329</sup> An exception here is the 2006 exhibition in Brno, which – as the artist explained to me – ‘was entirely selected, curated and displayed by Pokorny.’ Ivor Davies, email to the author, 17 September 2017.

<sup>330</sup> Rozemin Keshvani, email to the author, 14 November 2016.

<sup>331</sup> Rozemin Keshvani, *Exploding Utopia*, Laure Genillard Gallery, 2013.

<http://lgondon.org/files/Exploding%20Utopia%20PDF.pdf> (accessed 2 August 2016).

<sup>332</sup> “Rozemin Keshvani, email to the author, 15 November 2016. On the same issue Davies seems sure that he was clear about the title. Ivor Davies, email to the author, 17 September 2017.

question of truth and memory as always malleable.<sup>333</sup> I took the malleability of the archive as a central feature in presenting Davies' performances as part of *Silent Explosion*.

#### **4.1.1.4. The AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award with Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales<sup>334</sup>**

Given the findings of Heike Roms' research regarding the significance of Davies' work within early histories of performance art in Wales, and Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales's ambition 'to create internationally important platforms for the very best practice to have emerged from Wales or work that can be related to a Welsh context,'<sup>335</sup> an exhibition project featuring Ivor Davies' hitherto little exposed 1960s performance art practice was initiated in 2010. The exhibition was integrated into an AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) between Aberystwyth University and AC-NMW (with Roms as main supervisor) that ran from 2013 to 2016. The CDA built on Roms' research with the aim to explore Davies' performances through research in his unique archival collection of destruction in art. It aimed to deliver an exhibition that would put Davies' work under a new light, one that would provide an insight into his position within the network of the 1960s international avant-garde.

The CDA project description in 2013 emphasised the PhD research's close association with the exhibition as a 'platform on which to combine [the student's] historical,

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> The details of the CDA can be found in, "Do Networks Have Margins: Locating the Avantgarde in the 1960s: The Performance Works of Ivor Davies at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales," *Aber.ac.uk*, [https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departamental/tfts/tftspdfen/CDA\\_2013\\_FurtherParticulars.pdf](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departamental/tfts/tftspdfen/CDA_2013_FurtherParticulars.pdf) (accessed 25 June 2013).

<sup>335</sup> See Davies et.al., "Forewords," 14.



archival research on performance with a practical exploration into how such research may be visualized and embodied (through exhibition display, re--enactments, etc.), so that it creates a rich opportunity for the public to learn about and engage with a major aspect of Welsh and international art.’<sup>336</sup> The proposal I submitted to the CDA, and on the basis of which I was appointed to conduct the research, addressed two of the possible research questions outlined in the call:

- ‘Can performance strategies of re-enactment and process-based exhibition design constitute a performative mode of historiography in relation to performance history?’

and

- “What are the forms of public engagement that such strategies enable with regard to art historical materials, especially with the archival remains of performance events?”<sup>337</sup>

#### **4.1.1.5. Proposed curatorial and research strategies**

Upon reviewing Davies’s performances between 2013 and 2015, I understood from the outset that these works of the 1960s present a considerable challenge to curators who wish to exhibit such historical events in the context of a contemporary museum. As one of the primary aims of the exhibition was to present Davies’ 1960s performances as a prism through which to consider his wider artistic practice and the context of the international avant-garde of the time, a central concern of my work needed to be the preparing of this archive for exhibition. That documents from the archive had only been exhibited, thus far, as selected by the artist, and that Davies’ practice had not been critically analysed within the wider context of performance in the 1960s since Kristine Stiles’ yet unpublished doctoral thesis presented a

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<sup>336</sup> “Do Networks Have Margins? Locating the Avant-Garde of the 1960s: The Performance Works of Ivor Davies at Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales,” Project description, June 2013. See details of research context in Section 1.1 (Chapter 1).

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

challenge. However, the unique consent that the artist had given to access his archive provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at the whole of Davies' practice, irrespective of previous narratives or exhibitions.

Given also that the exhibition aimed to research artworks from before and after DIAS to present Davies' long-term interest in destruction in art, the question of how to exhibit performances alongside paintings in the context of the exhibition proved another curatorial challenge. This was for a variety of reasons: Firstly, performances survive as archive and this archival materiality makes the acquisition, preservation, collection and presentation of these works ill-suited to the conservation and exhibition standards developed historically in museums to manage objects. Secondly, as examples of destruction art, Davies' performances might seem resistant to the reconstructive aim of a retrospective exhibition. Given the works apparent formal as well as conceptual qualities, communicating the histories of Davies' performances entirely by means of the objects they generated (material remains and lens-based documentation) might fail to respond appropriately to the mediality and materiality of these artworks, as well as to the embodied nature of their experience. Finally, a more specific challenge in the context of AC-NMW was the lack of policies around the conservation, collection and display of time-based artworks, thus potentially risking neutralising the intention and effect of these works through institutional re-contextualisation and remediation. From the time of my initial proposal in June 2013 I saw the central challenge and opportunity of the research project in developing a methodological approach that combines critical, practical and theoretical elements to address the problem of exhibiting historical performance art in a contemporary museum. To address this issue, my method was to develop the curatorial strategy for the exhibition of Davies' performance archive simultaneously with the examination of existing exhibition models and theories that I discussed in Chapter 2 and 3.

### **4.3 Archiving (2014)**

#### **4.3.1 Establishing the Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive**

In this thesis, I use the title ‘Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive’, or abbreviated to ‘Ivor Davies DiA Archive’ to refer to the catalogue created between 2013-2015 as part of my research (Appendix 1). This catalogue is the annotated index of documents exhibited in *Silent Explosion* from the artist’s archival collection alongside recordings of oral history interviews I have conducted during my research. The cataloguing and archiving process were part of my curatorial research and presented here as research outcomes contributing to the 2015 *Silent Explosion* exhibition.

##### **4.2.1.1 The archival collection in 2013**

Davies initially and anecdotally described his archival collection of destruction in art as consisting of hundreds of documents,<sup>338</sup> most of which had only been partially identified. The collection, accumulated by Davies since the 1960s, includes:

- documents providing contextual information such as flyers, posters, press cuttings, correspondence, prop lists, receipts;
- archival relics such as props from different performances such as slides, cardboard boxes;
- conceptual documents such as scripts or ‘cue-sheets’ as Davies used to call them, and some drawings;
- photographic and film documentation;
- material generated after the events through the artist’s own archival practice,

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<sup>338</sup> In an email Davies estimated the size of his DIAS archive to be perhaps of around a thousand documents, 28 March 2014.

including different versions of event descriptions;

- work by other researchers and curators including oral history interviews and documents relating to exhibitions;
- correspondence, in particular with participants of DIAS, and catalogues collected from Davies visits to their exhibitions.<sup>339</sup>

Regarding material relating to DIAS, some aspects of this month-long event were seemingly better documented than others, suggesting an approach to collection that might have been opportunistic rather than systematically planned.<sup>340</sup> A part of the collection is formed by the photographic documentation of various DIAS events by Tom Picton, which Davies collected much later than the 1960s, with the help of Picton's family.<sup>341</sup> Another significant group of documents are letters to Davies from artists and organisers active in the 1960s, including Peter Holliday, Gustav Metzger, Raphael Montañez Ortiz, Jon Hendricks, Ian Breakwell and John Plant<sup>342</sup>. While there are also letters from others, the more regular

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<sup>339</sup> The articles, catalogues, documents that Davies added later to his collection are catalogued in Box 11, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>340</sup> Davies at the time lived in Edinburgh and travelled to London for certain events.

<sup>341</sup> The negatives of Picton's photographs, which Davies also collected at the time, have more recently been moved to Tate's collection.

<sup>342</sup> Peter Holliday was a student of Davies at Edinburgh University, who then became a lecturer himself and remained the artist's lifelong friend. Their correspondence is catalogued in Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. Jon Hendricks is an artist and curator who led the Judson Gallery at Judson Memorial Church in New York City in the 1960s. Some artists involved in Hendricks' performance programme contributed also to DIAS. Hendricks also curated a preview event for DIAS U.S.A., which, however, never took place. Letters from Jon Hendricks to Davies regarding the plans for DIAS U.S.A are catalogued in Box 10, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. Ian Breakwell, a world-renowned artist, was a friend of Ivor Davies and run Bristol Arts Centre in 1967. He invited Davies to contribute to an event on 16 December 1967 called *Mixture! An Experimental Evening of Film and Theatre*, where Davies presented *Still Life Story III*. On 21 January 1968 Breakwell participated in Davies' *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* at the *Swansea Arts Festival* (University College Swansea) playing the part of a 'surgeon'. Related correspondence is catalogued in Box 8, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. John Plant was a student at University College of Swansea in the 1960s, and the main organiser of the 1968 Swansea University Arts Festival, that included works by both Gustav Metzger and Ivor Davies. For descriptions of the Festival see Roms, "Remembering Adam on St Agnes' Eve," 118-121; Judit Bodor, "Interviews with John Plant and Ivor Davies at Swansea University, April 30, 2014." [video recording, c. 60 minutes]; and "Adam on St Agnes' Eve", [edited film footage of the interview, c. 5 minutes], Box 9, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

appearance of these names suggests that these people were Davies' friends and key professional connections at the time. The letters provide insight into Davies' contribution as organiser of DIAS,<sup>343</sup> as well as into the not always collaborative relationship between the artists involved. For example, they reveal the personal differences between Gustav Metzger and Raphael Ortiz<sup>344</sup> that contributed to DIAS never becoming an international network that Metzger initially might have envisaged.<sup>345</sup>

Regarding Davies' own performances in the 1960s, I had very little understanding of the works in 2013, at the start of my research. Documents relating to performances up to 1968 were mixed in with documents relating to DIAS (1966). There was no definitive list of how many performances Davies devised between 1966 and 1968, and the artist himself couldn't give me a number either. To develop an understanding of these works, I conducted a thorough review of their interpretation in the contemporary press, and in later research publications and exhibitions (discussed under 4.1.1). The process made me aware of the character of the archive, and Davies as archivist-curator. Some documents were kept in better condition (either framed or wrapped in acid-free paper), due to their inclusion and re-circulation in exhibitions. The rest of the material was kept in simple folders without any recognisable order (Figure 37). Part of the collection also are photocopies of photographs, digital versions of films made from 8 and 16 mm film reels over time, and several copies of the artist's later descriptions of his works often cut up and reassembled. Davies' obsessive copying, reordering, rewriting and collaging in the archive manifest an interest in making

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<sup>343</sup> Davies' involvement as organiser is not acknowledged at present. See for example "Gustav Metzger" (biography), *Tate.org*, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/gustav-metzger-7196> (accessed June 15, 2015).

<sup>344</sup> Remaining correspondence suggest that Metzger did not like Ortiz' and did not support DIAS U.S.A.

Metzger's letters to Davies in relation to DIAS U.S.A. are catalogued in Box 10, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>345</sup> Metzger's ambitions for a network is apparent in the four newsletters ('DIAS INFORMATION I-IV.') that he circulated between March and September 1967 about destruction art events internationally, one of which describes DIAS as a 'network.' These newsletters are catalogued in Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. Metzger talked about his ambition for DIAS as an international network also in an interview with the author on 11 November 2014.

through recycling; creation through destruction; they are also indicative of the artist's approach to self-historicisation, whereby he reinterprets his works in exhibitions and publications through presenting variations and versions of the same documentary material.

Through my encounter with the archive I learnt a great deal about Davies' performance practice, but also about how our understanding of artworks might change because of reinterpretations (see my earlier discussion of *Anatomic Explosions*, for example). An extreme example of this is the performance *Silent Explosion* (30 September 1966) at the Mercury Theatre, presented on the last day of DIAS. There is no material trace of this work in the archive, but the work survives through the artist's repeated recollection of the event. The first recording of Davies' memory of this work appears in Kristine Stiles' PhD dissertation in 1987, 21 years after the event happened (discussed in 4.1.1.2.1.). In this Davies' quoted describing actions, such as for example, 'someone lacerated two curves in the screen' while 'a figure lacerated parts of the [medical] diagrams of male and female internal anatomy, entering and disappearing through lacerations, and conducting with a meat axe until the screen was broken.'<sup>346</sup> Aligning with his intentions of the 1960s as being outside of the performance, in 1987 there is no mentioning of himself taking any part in the event. However, by the time Davies describes the work again in 2008 to Heike Roms, his memory of his involvement is different stating that 'I actually took part in the performance myself for some mysterious reason. I cut the screen and moved in and out of the spaces and had projections put on it.'<sup>347</sup> Most recently, in an essay in 2015 written by the artist for the publication accompanying *Silent Explosion*, the artist paraphrases his own 1987 memory but

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<sup>346</sup>Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, 614-615.

<sup>347</sup>Davies cited in Roms, "Origins," 27.

adds more detail<sup>348</sup> and replaces the words ‘someone’ and ‘a figure’ with ‘I’. For example, he states that ‘[F]rom behind, dressed in a white boiler suit, I then lacerated two curves in the screen with a Stanley knife’, and later that ‘I slashed parts of the diagrams and photographs with a blade behind, entering and disappearing again through the orifices and conducting with a meat axe until the screen was broken.’<sup>349</sup> By exploring and experiencing Davies’ approach to interpretation one can derive a sense of a performative mode of self-historicisation, within which the work is generated through oral history and is kept in constant flux materially through the production of copies, variations and versions of documentation across media. However, the multiplicity of documents and the artist’s performative approach to archiving does not come across from the exhibitions I reviewed, where the artworks have been fixed into a small selection of documents that are interpreted as ‘original,’ unique and singularly authored remains from the historical events.

#### **4.3.2.2 Cataloguing (2013-2015)**

Given the performativity of Davies’ approach to archiving, creating a new artificial order amongst the documents in the context of the exhibition project seemed problematic.

However, to be able to move the material into the museum we needed to identify documents and create a catalogue upon which the collection could be insured and interpreted. As Davies’ archival collection is private, still growing and will remain in his studio for the foreseeable future, the cataloguing process had three aims. Firstly, we needed a simple system within which the artist can easily locate documents and that is flexible enough for him to add more material in the future. Secondly, we needed a list that helped us keep track of what items were moved from the studio to the museum, and that could be used as a basis for labels and

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<sup>348</sup> It appears that Davies remembers more of this performance as time goes by, as the most recent (2015) recollection of the event is the most detailed one.

<sup>349</sup> Davies, “Silent Explosion,” 37.

exhibition checklist in the exhibition and publication. Thirdly, we needed a list that could be published to enable future research, even if the archive remains physically in the artist's studio.

One of the issues that arose with creating a catalogue was not being sure about the future of the collection; whether it would remain 'organic' – one that is defined by the artist's routine activities and ordered according to his subjective interests and potentially changing intentions – or become 'artificial' – one that is arranged, catalogued and developed according to some institutional archival standards in order to keep the material physically safe and to enable easy collection in the future (if the artist decides to sell it).<sup>350</sup> To create an artificial archive criteria is needed not only for cataloguing the existing collection, but also for collection development, to make sure that any additions will be described and classified accordingly. Creating an artificial archive was not a possibility in our case for different reasons. One of the reasons was that my doctoral research included archiving only as part of the curatorial process in developing the exhibition, with intention of contributing to the development of a collection for its own sake. Another reason was that National Museum Cardiff had no existing database that would have been appropriate for cataloguing events as collection items. As Sally Carter, Principal Documentation Officer at AC-NMW, clarified to me on 3 February 2014, the museum's current database template functions at item level, which is suitable only for logging individual objects. To add metadata about performance

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<sup>350</sup> I use the terms 'organic' and 'artificial' as standardized by the Society of American Archivists to differentiate between an organic collection as '[A] body of records that grows as the result of the routine activities of its creator' and an artificial collection as '[A] collection of materials with different provenance assembled and organized to facilitate its management or use.' <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/o/organic-collection> and <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/a/artificial-collection> (accessed 15 April 2016). Following these definitions an organic archive can be systematically ordered but guided by personal criteria as opposed to artificial collections, which are guided by archival standards.



events, a new template would be needed to allow fond-level organisation and draw together files, materials and objects generated in the context of an event, rather than focusing on individual objects or files in isolation. Although a new template could have extended my research to also include research into the future of collecting performance art at AC-NMW, the Museum – perhaps understandably – did not want to invest in developing a database to catalogue artworks that were not in its ownership.

In response to these issues, the annotated catalogue (see Appendix 1.)<sup>351</sup> lists documents by names, titles, dates, with annotations including information gathered from the artist during conversations or from the documents themselves. The documents have been arranged in eleven boxes, following the chronology of events in the case of Davies' performances, and according to the type of documents (such as photos, correspondence, press etc.) in the case of DIAS. In the physical archive that is kept in Davies' studio in Penarth<sup>352</sup> each item also has an individual number given to help the artist and future researchers locate the documents within the boxes. These numbers are not included in the published catalogue that functions more as a general source of information. Regardless of how loosely the material is ordered to protect the 'organic' nature of the collection, the cataloguing process was an intervention in Davies' archive and created a more artificial system than had been there before. At the same time, the order we created is only temporary, and the artist can rearrange it again in the future as he wishes according to his interests, or intentions. While cataloguing is not considered an essential part of curators' work, it was a necessary in my case in order to size up the material archive that we then needed to exhibit. The cataloguing and archiving process allowed a better understanding of the extended archival materiality of

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<sup>351</sup> See also Judit Bodor, "Ivor Davies Destruction in Art (DiA) Archive," insert (1-12).

<sup>352</sup> The catalogued documents have been moved into new acid free archival boxes as part of the research process with help from Emily O'Reilly at AC-NMW and with financial support from the Museum.

Davies' performances and led to new approaches to exhibiting these works beyond the customary documentary display of a few selected documents.

#### **4.3.2 Extended research, site visits and oral history**

To understand Davies' relationship to DIAS and gain further insight into his performances it was important to address the gaps in the archival collection and extend the research beyond its holdings. To this end, my methods included research in other archives relating to DIAS,<sup>353</sup> fieldwork, and interviews. The research in other archives enhanced my understanding of how the documents in Davies' collection might relate to DIAS and its organisation as a whole. It was also important to cross-reference dates, names or other information between documents and provided by the artist. The information I gathered was then included in my short annotations in the published archival catalogue that I discussed earlier. This part of the research also led to my better understanding of the narrative that connects the individual documents within Davies' archive, which was useful later in arranging the material in the vitrines in Gallery 22 as part of the exhibition (for details see 4.3.2).

My fieldwork included visits to and documentation of the places mentioned in the archival documents as locations of DIAS events. Whilst not knowing beforehand what this embodied research would reveal, visiting the locations of historical events (Figures, 38, 39, 40) gave a sense of the physical environment of DIAS and Davies' performances. I also

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<sup>353</sup> Including at the National Library of Wales, the NSSAW, the Tate Archive, the British Library, Artpool (Budapest), and the online depositories of the Archives of American Art and The Fales Library. I also drew on the work of Heike Roms, who had previously undertaken research into Davies' archive for her enquiry into *Adam on St Agnes' Eve (1968)*, *Performance-wales.org*, <http://www.performance-wales.org/archive/eventsyears/1968.html> (accessed 10 October 2015).

better appreciated the wider historical context of DIAS by reading popular literature of the 1960s in preparation for my walks, written by or about those involved with the London underground art scene at the time.<sup>354</sup> From this research, I understood the oral history of the area and the narratives that are often missing from mainstream art histories. Through this I could, for example, better understand the close physical and historical proximity between some seemingly very different events, such as the first Notting Hill Carnival and DIAS that happened in the same Portobello Road area of London, and both used the same derelict WW2 bomb site (London Free School Playground) for events.<sup>355</sup> Understanding the physical connection between events helped to identify some of the details in the background of performances on photographic documents in Davies' archive, such as a painted sign advertising a barbecue event that features in many of Tom Picton's photographs was not in any way part of DIAS.

The urban landscape of the city, however, had evidently and significantly changed between 1966 and my walking fieldwork in 2014. While in the 1960s the sites used for DIAS were mostly derelict buildings or bombed-out areas, by the time I visited new housing projects had created new street-layout that made it difficult to locate some of the venues with precision, such as the house where Davies' *Anatomic Explosion* happened on 13 September 1966. To help navigate around the streets on Notting Hill, I used the 1960s "Portobello

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<sup>354</sup> Including Jeff Nuttall, *Bomb Culture*, London: Methuen, 1968; Jonathon Green, *Days In The Life: Voices from the English Underground 1961-71*, London: Pimlico, 1998; Mick Farren, *Give The Anarchist a Cigarette*, London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 2001; Jenny Fabian, and Johnny Byrne, *Groupie*, London: Omnibus Press, 1997 (new edition); Jim Haynes, *Thanks for Coming!*, London: Faber & Faber, 1984; Barry Miles, *London Calling, A Countercultural History of London Since 1945*, London: Atlantic Books, 2011; and Jon Savage, *1966: The Year the Decade Exploded*, London: Faber & Faber, 2015.

<sup>355</sup> London Free School (known also as LFS) was a community action group that started the Carnival. See for example John 'Hoppy' Hopkins, "The Formation of the London Free School", *International Times*, (blog) 19 March 2015, <http://internationaltimes.it/the-formation-of-the-london-free-school-and-ufo-club/> (accessed 12 November 2015)

Counter Culture Guide” that I found online, as a map.<sup>356</sup> The walks, even without being able to locate some sites, allowed a better understanding of the extended geography of DIAS: and that the events happened across a more dispersed terrain than I had appreciated beforehand. Through this embodied research I could also understand better Davies’ archive as map of his journey around London during DIAS, a collection that (whilst indisputably extensive) developed through his participation in a selection of events rather than as a result of attempting to comprehensively chronicle the events at the time.

Following the archival research and the fieldwork, I conducted interviews as a further research method with which to explore the gaps in the archive. I was particularly interested in using oral history as a method useful to explore personal histories of DIAS particularly relating to Davies’ performances.<sup>357</sup> I planned interviews with people who I identified during the cataloguing process as important to Davies, and potentially important in the context of the exhibition. I first interviewed Gustav Metzger (Figure 41), the initiator and architect of DIAS, and a lifelong friend of Davies. Although Metzger had given interviews on DIAS before, I wanted to learn more about the practical side of organising this large event, and the role of the Honorary Committee. The interview took place on 11 November 2014 at Metzger’s London home-studio, and was filmed by Pete Telfer in anticipation of a future dissemination, either as part of our exhibition or as documentary film by Culture Colony Vision.<sup>358</sup> In preparation for this interview, I researched documents relating to Metzger in the

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<sup>356</sup> The guide is available on *Portobellofilmfestival.com*, <http://www.portobellofilmfestival.com/image/2006pics/pffmap-big.jpg> (accessed 20 April 2015).

<sup>357</sup> To prepare for the interviews I participated in ‘Introduction to Oral History’, 23 April 2014, at the British Library.

<sup>358</sup> Run by Pete Telfer, Culture Colony Vision (CCV) creates all video content for the Culture Colony web site including films about individual artists, artist groups and large arts organisations. The films range from short documentation and promotional films to feature documentaries. See *Culturecolony.com*,

Ivor Davies DiA Archive, as well as previous interviews with the artist.<sup>359</sup> Metzger was unable to respond to most of my questions<sup>360</sup> noting that his memory of the whole event has faded. However, he did confirm that DIAS was intended as a collaboratively organised event and mentioned Mario Amaya and Ivor Davies as active in the Committee. He also mentioned that it was Amaya who brought his attention to Yoko Ono as potential participant. Due to the artist's relatively little remaining memory of the event, his ill health and quiet voice,<sup>361</sup> the quality of the interview was not good enough to be used in the exhibition.<sup>362</sup>

Building on my experience with the fieldwork and the interview with Gustav Metzger, I conducted a second set of interviews with Ivor Davies and John Plant on the site of the performance venue of the 1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* performance (Figure 42).<sup>363</sup> By returning together to the performance venue nearly fifty years after it happened, I wanted to evoke (and juxtapose) the memories of Davies as author/producer and Plant as witness/participant. Importantly for my interest in the gaps in the archive, the interview revealed the differences between Davies' intention (i.e. the idea as expressed in the cue-sheet) and what happened in the event itself. For example, both interviewees agreed that the explosions that Davies had planned for marking the change of actions during the event (and

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<http://www.culturecolony.com/member/culture-colony-vision> (accessed 12 May 2017).

<sup>359</sup> Documents relating to Gustav Metzger in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive include five letters (Box 1, Box 3 and Box 10), photographs (Box 4) and newspaper cuttings (catalogued in Box 11). Interviews that I have consulted include "Extremes Touch. Gustav Metzger interviewed by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Oxford 1999", *Undo.Net*, July 31, 2000, <http://1995-2015.undo.net/cgi-bin/openframe.pl?x=/cgi-bin/undo/features/features.pl%3Fa%3Di%26cod%3D16> (accessed 13 January 2016); and Pete Telfer, "Interview with Gustav Metzger", 1995, London. (unpublished DVD).

<sup>360</sup> I asked questions relating to the Ravensbourne Symposium and meeting Davies; the circumstances of developing DIAS in 1966; the Committee (including Davies) and their contribution to the organisation DIAS; plans for other editions of DIAS and their failure; and the legacy and currency of DIAS today. The raw video footage can be accessed online at [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive).

<sup>361</sup> My interview was one of the last the artist gave before passing away on 1 March 2017.

<sup>362</sup> DVD copies of the recorded interview have been deposited at National Museum Cardiff, the Gustav Metzger Estate and the Ivor Davies DiA Archive (Box 11.).

<sup>363</sup> The site visit to Swansea University Student's Union Building took place on 20 April 2015. Apart from interviews with Davies and Plant, I also recorded a group discussion between Heike Roms, Ivor Davies and John Plant about performance art in the 1960s, which did not get used in the exhibition.

for which he brought maroons down from Edinburgh) couldn't be accommodated in the space, while other actions happened regardless of the artist's written instructions recorded on the remaining cue sheets. A gap that arose in the memories of both was whether Davies – who lived in Edinburgh at the time – had seen the venue of the performance prior to arriving for the event. Although Davies now recalls the architectural space as an important part of the work, it is more likely that he developed his ideas only by using a floor plan sent to him by Plant, in which case the performance was not so much site specific as it was aware of the venue's general spatial conditions.

In the interview, I also gave Davies a chance to rethink the artwork in retrospect and describe what he might think as key to understanding the work in the context of the exhibition. This part of the research was important to identify how the work could 'speak to' the contemporary spectator in the 2015 exhibition. In the conversation, Davies' remarks on the 'unconscious actions' of the participants as the 'most effective' part of the work was surprising, given my understanding of this work based on the cue-sheet as a highly controlled environment where actions followed his instructions. His description of the sonic atmosphere of the event as a 'slightly strange forest of sound and shadows' with soothing noises of birds and children juxtaposed with sudden noises of destruction was information that complemented my understanding of the work from watching the black and white film or the material archive. These descriptions greatly informed my thinking of how to present this particular work in the exhibition, which I discuss further under 4.3.3. Excerpts of the interviews with Davies and Plant were used also used for producing a short documentary film

on *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* that we exhibited on an iPod in the exhibition (Figure 43).<sup>364</sup> I discussed the interview and the edited documentary film (as outcomes of my research) on 3 March 2016 at AC-NMW, as part of the public seminar series 'Exhibition Matters' (see my discussion of the seminar in 4.3.4.).

### 4.3.3 Reflection

While the fieldwork produced new insights into the geography and physical environment of Davies' performances, as well as new memories for the participants who were taken to back to the sites, the interviews produced new narratives based on these memories that might further 'mythologise' the events. Myth, as opposed to fact, can be thought about – as artist John Newling proposes – as the 'gap between an object and our understanding of it (...) [that becomes] evident as we recall the experience of regenerating lost memories through an object that we have rediscovered. Joyful or sad, these evoked memories reconnect us to the place or event. These memories are not a total recall of place or event but are an edited remembering.'

<sup>365</sup> If remembering is always fragmentary and edited, and therefore cannot be regarded as 'authentic' (regardless of who remembers), then the question of whose 'truth' we should communicate in the exhibition of historical performance events becomes key in understanding these artworks.

Through archiving Davies' 1960s performances, the gap between these object biographies and the artwork's wider trajectory also became apparent: in other words, how performances are preserved, maintained and presented as collection items, and how the work lives on through memories and reinterpretation. If we consider the trajectory of these works

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<sup>364</sup> The interviews were recorded by Rhodri Viney, Digital Content Assistant at NC-NMW, who also helped me producing the film following my editorial instructions and choice of imagery. The edited film (4 minutes and 19 seconds with subtitles) is available on *YouTube.com*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpVhKVueM-U>.

<sup>365</sup> John Newling, "Cathedral," in *Stamping Uncertainty* (London: SWPA, 2004), 23.

as part of the archive, then we have a richer material basis through which to present the works in the exhibition than merely displaying once again what Davies might select from his archive. However, as the trajectory of performance is not (always) authored or authorised by the artist, a dilemma arises of how we can account for the multiplicity of materiality and authorship that is present in the extended archive, while remaining respectful of the artist's own intentions and memories? Furthermore, given that *Silent Exhibition* was a solo retrospective, how much space could, or should, we give to works of other artists who are also present in the archive? And how much space should be given over to our own discursive curatorial meta-text regarding the interpretation of the works? These questions will be discussed further in 4.3.

### **4.3 Exhibition-making (2015)**

#### **4.3.1 Designing the Narrative Exhibition**

In developing *Silent Explosion* my curatorial aim was to enable an experiential access to the archive of Davies' historical performance events. This meant moving away from modes of presentations where the spectator is an observer of unique objects relating to the historical production of events, and instead become participants of the work as performance manifested in a temporary environment. Following my research into performative modes of curating (see examples in Chapter 2 and 3), and informed by conversations with the artist and co-curator Nicholas Thornton,<sup>366</sup> I proposed an approach to display that was not illustrating the chronological development of the artistic style, but focused on creating connections between different types of works that are examples of Davies's interest in destruction. I have documented my curatorial approach in an exhibition plan I drafted in 2014, and produced a

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<sup>366</sup> We had approximately twenty meetings at the artist's studio in Penarth and at National Museum Cardiff between November, 2013 and March 2015 to develop the exhibition plan.



document that indicated the arrangement of artworks on the plan from the list of works we created together. This exhibition plan (Appendix 2.) is a key outcome of my research as it presents my curatorial thinking that needs reflection, even though for financial & practical reasons it was never fully realised in the actual exhibition.

The plan included, for example, a display of a group of recent paintings in the first gallery (Gallery 20) such as *Yr Ysgriften ar y Mur I: Dinistr iath a chymuned* (Writing on the Wall I: Destruction of Language and Community, 2001), *Yr Ysgriften ar y Mur II: Bomio gwledddy llwm* (Writing on the Wall II, 2001), and *Epynt* (2000-2003),<sup>367</sup> and objects from the artist's childhood in the last gallery (Gallery 24), such as a photo of the artist as a two-year-old child at his home in Treharris (1957), an edition of *The Works of Aristotle*, a sex and pregnancy manual first published in the 18th century, and an edition of a 19th century medical book with anatomical drawings of male and female bodies.<sup>368</sup> While the three paintings in the front are among Davies' best-known works relating to his interest in the transformation of Welsh identity in history, the three objects in the back are personally important to the artist, and relate to his curiosity in the transformation of the human body that influenced his practice since the 1950s. The six objects were positioned as counterparts at the two ends of the exhibition, and presented as spatialised triptychs; while individually these objects belonged to different times in the artist's career, for the duration of the exhibition they gained a new temporary meaning through being visually connected. Taken together, they were proposed as a key to understanding Davies' micro- and macrocosmic interest in destruction as a transformation of 'matter'; both in cultural consciousness and in human

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<sup>367</sup> See Appendix 2, 10-13.

<sup>368</sup> These objects were remembered in conversations by Davies as being in the possession of his family and influenced his imagination from a very early age. This is possibly most clear in his interest in the human anatomy as is apparent in the repeated use of images of birth and pregnancy as well as objects that refer to the human anatomy in his performances in the 1960s.

physicality.

Between the two galleries at either end of the exhibition, I planned to exhibit the archive of Davies' 1960s performances across the two main galleries (Gallery 21 and Gallery 22) and connected spaces that I will discuss in detail under 4.3.2. The exhibition was planned at this stage as an 'environment' in which material relating to the 1960s performances would take over more than half of the exhibition space to allow a change of perspective on Davies' career as a painter. My design for a narrative exhibition revolved conceptually and spatially around a silent archival film-footage of an atomic bomb explosion. I proposed to source this film from public archives. The inclusion of this film footage aimed to locate a presence for Davies' eponymous 1966 performance, which although otherwise undocumented did appropriate such silent film footage as part of the event.<sup>369</sup> Resituating the readymade would in effect bring some of the spectators' experience of the work into the narrative environment of the planned exhibition. As Davies could not recall which specific film he used, I proposed projecting a film showing Exercise Desert Rock VI., Operation Teapot, (18 February – 15 May 1955), which would have been available and culturally familiar at the time of his performance in 1966. I proposed to project the footage in the very first gallery, on the back of a false wall, that I planned in the middle of the space. On the other side of this wall – facing the main entrance – I planned to display *Yr Isgriften ar u Mur I. (Writing on the Wall I.)*. The archival film footage would have thus been physically present in the same space as Davies' three paintings but facing the archival display of Davies' Destruction in Art Archive (Gallery 21 and 22) to provide a visual and conceptual link between the global context of Davies' practice in the 1960s and the local context of his later paintings. The inclusion of the

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<sup>369</sup> See the description of the work in Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, Vol. 3., 614. and in section 4.2.1.1 in this thesis.

film aimed to reflect the limited capacity of the tangible archive to hold onto the memory of a historical event, and to raise questions about authenticity in performance art by replacing Davies' memory of an appropriated film footage in the historical event with another appropriated film in the exhibition.

The exhibition was planned to present different types of objects – just like in the artist's studio – in seemingly random order, where the connection between objects would appear through the spectator's journey across the exhibition. The avoidance of any chronological or media specific arrangement of the objects was inspired by Case Study 1. (*Partners*), and aimed as a curatorial tool to show artworks from a new perspective. The proposal was welcomed by Nicholas Thornton and initially also by the artist. We used it as the basis of conversations with the AC-NMW exhibition management team and it influenced the initial exhibition plan created by Simon Tozzo, the museum's 3D Designer (Figure 44). However, due to the collaborative nature of the process, and to unforeseen problems with practicalities of the exhibition production, not every element of this initial plan could be realised in the actual exhibition. At the end, a compromise was achieved whereby the reversed chronology (showing the most recent works first, and the early works last with the 1960s performances in the middle) was accommodated, but the display in the first and last gallery changed to accommodate the artist's wish to avoid the narrative exhibition concept and include more of his art objects displayed in a more traditional way. The rest of the design, Gallery 21, 22 and the stairwell, remained allocated to the Ivor Davies DiA Archive, which I will discuss in the following sections.

## 4.3.2 The Ivor Davies DiA Archive in the exhibition

### 4.3.2.1 Gallery 22: DIAS

From the very beginning of our discussions about the exhibition, Davies expressed his desire to show the entirety of what we catalogued as the Ivor Davies DiA Archive, regardless of whether the documents had ‘iconic’ status in terms of the history of DIAS or were a piece of paper with an address or a note that was important and intelligible only for him personally. This meant we needed to find a way to display approximately 400 items of correspondence, ephemera, press cuttings as well as photographic and film documentation. Davies was also keen to present the archival collection as an installation, which he envisaged by hanging photocopies of documents from the ceiling.<sup>370</sup> His curatorial intention was not only to encourage an understanding of the archive as artwork but also to emphasise that performance disappears and becomes essentially inaccessible over time, regardless of the access to information that documents, documentation and memory can provide.

My thinking around how to curate Davies’ destruction in art archive as an artwork was influenced by discussions with Portuguese artist Pedro Lagoa about his *Archive of Destruction*, which I have visited at Gasworks, London in May 2014.<sup>371</sup> From my conversation with Lagoa (see Appendix 3.) I learnt how he has developed a series of exhibition-installations which focus upon his growing archive of documents relating to the theme of destruction. Each iteration of the archive of destruction reorders the material of the archive in response to Lagoa’s changing approach to display, which is always site-specific,

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<sup>370</sup> Davies mentions this idea in his Foreword to the publication in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 9.

<sup>371</sup> Lagoa was artist in residence at Gasworks between 15 January and 8 July 2014. I visited him on May 20, 2014. For more on the residency see “Pedro Lagoa”, *Gasworks.org.uk*, <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/pedro-lagoa/> (accessed 23 March 2014).

and designed to fit the context within which he is invited to work (including a library, a museum, a gallery or a studio-residency so far). Lagoa, whose archive consists only of material accessible online, often experiments with avant-garde techniques of collaging, cut-up, appropriation, chance method, and improvisation that create a counter-institutional model to archiving, where the material remains indeterminate and open to constant re-interpretation. Davies' proposal to present his archival collection of destruction in art as the artwork was also intended to counter the presentation of institutional archives, however, his thoughts were less driven by an intention to generate counter-narratives, and more with emphasizing his status as custodian and collector. While Lagoa uses archiving as part of his critical artistic practice that questions normative modes of knowledge production, Davies has developed his archive to protect the memory of DIAS and his own performance practice to compensate for the gaps in art history as articulated in exhibitions and publications. Comparing Lagoa's archive with Davies' helped to understand the two artists differing positions as archivists and curators. Based upon my understanding of Davies' archive, and the aims of the exhibition I argued that while presenting the Ivor Davies DiA archive as a personal collection is important, presenting it through hanging (copies of) documents from the ceiling we could not communicate his role as the organiser of DIAS, or make his otherwise private archive accessible for public research, which were the main reasons for making the exhibition in the first place.

Another consideration relating to the exhibition of the Ivor Davies DiA Archive was whether we could include artworks by other artists to whom documents in the archive refer. The issue here was how to balance the international and multi-authored nature of the material collected in the archive with the idea of the exhibition as a 'one man show'.<sup>372</sup> While the idea

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<sup>372</sup> 'One man show' is how solo exhibitions are often referred to in artists' biographies.

of a solo exhibition of more than one artist might sound contradictory, there are some precedents for this model: for example, *Barbara Hepworth. Sculpture for a Modern World* (24 June – 25 October 2015, Tate Britain) included works by Ben Nicholson and Ursula Edgecumbe. While such an approach might be helpful in putting the artist's works into context, it might at the same time lead to the works of the other artists overshadowing the artworks on which the exhibition wanted to focus. I explored works by Ian Breakwell, Dom Sylvester Houédard, Yoko Ono, Gustav Metzger, all artists who are included in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive, and discussed the possibility of exhibiting them alongside Davies' works with the artist and the Museum curator. In the end, we decided that, given the other artists' already established international profile in the context of destruction art performance, the inclusion of their artworks would risk pushing Davies' practice into the background, thus repeating the artist's lack of visibility in the histories of DIAS and reinforcing an already dominant narrative about the work. On the other hand, by deciding to present other artists through the documentation we found in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive, we could create a sense of Davies' personal network at the time, and also include artists whose works are not held in prominent collections. and often remain invisible in DIAS exhibitions.<sup>373</sup>

To devise a mode of display that would accommodate the artist's desire to show the entirety of the archive and make the documents accessible, I researched and proposed further archival exhibition models, including ideas for interactive spaces and ideas for conventional museum display. Creating an interactive research space was my curatorial preference, to emphasise the nature of the archive as an open space for interpretation; as Jacques Derrida explains:

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<sup>373</sup> Example include documents and photographs relating to Juan Hidalgo, Anthony Scott, Robin Page, Al Hansen and Werner Schreib.

By incorporating the knowledge deployed in reference to it, the archive augments itself, engrosses itself, it gains in autocritas. But in the same stroke it loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have. [...] The archivist produces more archive, and that is why the archive is never closed.<sup>374</sup>

I imagined the possibility of turning the gallery into a research environment for the duration of the exhibition where spectators would become involved as archivists. This mode of display has been used, for example, in the travelling exhibition and archive *Re-Act Feminism* (2011-2013, curated by Bettina Knaup and Beatrice Ellen Stammer), which presented an ongoing online project researching the histories of feminist, gender-critical and queer performance art as ‘a continually expanding, temporary and living performance archive.’<sup>375</sup> *Re-Act Feminism* used the exhibition as a physical manifestation of its online archive in the form of a sculptural installation, and as a site for learning and research, through which further material was generated for the archive. I considered this model to be useful for presenting the part of Davies’ archive that related to DIAS, playing with ideas of the archive as both an ‘aesthetic form’ and contextual material, and allowing the spectator to become a participant in a collaborative research activity relating to the histories of this event. This model also provided an alternative to realising Davies’ idea for presenting the archive as a performative environment that changes through the archival activities of the spectators. However, Davies was not too interested in this idea of engagement and research, and so we needed to find a compromise.

We all (Thornton, Davies and I) agreed that the archival material would need to remain in the same condition in which we found it in the studio and presented without any sign of intervention from museum conservators. This was important to close the visual gap

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<sup>374</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 68.

<sup>375</sup> The project is documented on [www.reactfeminism.de](http://www.reactfeminism.de) (accessed 1 February 2016).

that often exists between how we experience archives in a studio environment and how archives are presented in galleries, where they are often framed, cleaned, and look like art objects. However, to allow this we needed to explore the practicalities of such display given that the environment of the museum, particularly the lighting and temperature conditions, potentially harms fragile documents without protection. After consulting with the museum's paper conservator, Emily O'Reilly, we agreed that the least interventionist mode of presentation that at the same time was safe for displaying the documents for months was to use bespoke glass frames. However, instead of framing individual objects, the glass ran around the undivided space of the gallery with only a gap in the middle of a long wall for projecting video documentation of Davies' performances. We presented documents behind the glass on shallow shelves (see Figures 22-26).

In terms of the arrangement of the documents on the shelves I proposed that we would not follow the order we established in the catalogue but arrange documents to make some of the hitherto underexplored histories of DIAS – that I found while cataloguing – somewhat visible. For example, I wanted to invite the spectator to think about DIAS as an idea for an artist network. To do so, I grouped together the four *DIAS Newsletters* (1967–1968) compiled by Gustav Metzger that promoted and circulated material relating to destruction art, sent to him by participants.<sup>376</sup> Next to these, I presented the correspondence around the plans for DIAS U.S.A. that showed signs of a group effort in having another edition of the meeting. While the loose grouping of documents was linked to my insights into these potential narratives, it was important that the display doesn't look like a fixed narrative.

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<sup>376</sup> Catalogued as *DIAS Information I-IV*. March – September 1967, Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. See also Note 372 in this thesis.



To make a reading possible without suggesting it as the only possible narrative, the documents were displayed without visually highlighting specific items as more important than others. The archive on display had no captions, only item numbers. Visitors could decide to either just wander around and read the content of the documents randomly, or, if they were interested in knowing more, they could use a bilingual (Welsh and English) exhibition checklist that I created, with the help of which they could identify the documents on display, or they could read the annotated list in the publication.

#### **4.3.2.2      The Stairwell: Ravensbourne Symposium**

The approach to the display of archival material slightly changed in the stairwell area between Gallery 22 and Gallery 21. The stairwell space is regarded by museum staff as transitory as its main display area is a corridor space. With a lift and two staircases at its three sides and the entry to Gallery 22 on the fourth, the space is normally used to display educational material or leaflets. I proposed that we dedicate this space to the *Symposium on Destruction, Creation & Chemical Change*, or the *Ravensbourne Symposium* as it became known.<sup>377</sup> This one-day event on 23 March 1966 at Ravensbourne College of Art was initiated by Peter Holliday, a former student of Davies who was a lecturer at the college at the time. The archival material relating to the organisation of this symposium provides insight into the developing friendship and professional working relationship between Gustav Metzger and Ivor Davies from March 1966 onward. At Ravensbourne, artists Mark Boyle and Dom Sylvester Houédard (aka dsh), joined Davies and Metzger to give presentations and

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<sup>377</sup> I use the title of the Symposium here as it appears in Dom Sylvester Houédard's transcription of the event, but it is also referred to often by Davies as *Destruction Creation Movement*, based on a poster he made that was used to advertise the event.

participate in a public conversation.<sup>378</sup> That the symposium could in some ways be considered as the ‘prelude’ to DIAS is suggested by an undated letter from Gustav Metzger to Davies in which he mentions that “[I] would be interested to arrange another Symposium at that time, and if you are interested, I’d be glad if you would help arrange this.”<sup>379</sup> The Ravensbourne Symposium had indeed a lot in common with DIAS, including its theme, Metzger and Davies as co-organisers, and its format as a combination of discussions, presentations and actions, albeit held on a much smaller scale.

Ravensbourne’s connection to DIAS has already been noted by Kristine Stiles’ in her 1987 PhD,<sup>380</sup> but its significance as precedent of DIAS has been overlooked in exhibitions, so it was important that we present this event as a central to *Silent Explosion* to address this gap in art historical narratives. While considered a transitory space, I regarded the stairwell area as a perfect setting for displaying the Ravensbourne material as the space’s position just before visitors enter Gallery 22 (with its display of the DIAS material) acted as a visual metaphor for the historic position of the Ravensbourne Symposium in relation to DIAS. The museum staff harboured initial concerns over whether people would stop to ‘read’ archival documents in what is considered as a corridor space. To tackle this, I proposed an approach that would engage the spectator more as participant than reader. A 13-page transcript of the symposium by Houédard held in Davies’ archive was the basis of my

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<sup>378</sup> I use the title of the Symposium as it appears in Dom Sylvester Houédard’s transcription of the event, but it is also referred by Davies as the symposium on *Destruction Creation Movement*, based on a poster he made to advertise the event. Both documents are now catalogued in Box 1 in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>379</sup> In the letter Metzger reports on the plans for the Ravensbourne Symposium after meeting Peter Holliday in London. He mentions their plans for the theme [‘destruction and creation in art’], proposes Frank Popper, Mario Amaya, and Richard Hamilton as other participants and asks Davies to suggest more participants. While none of the people suggested by Metzger in this letter participated in the Ravensbourne symposium, Popper and Amaya became members of the Organising Committee of DIAS. Gustav Metzger, Letter to Ivor Davies [manuscript], no date. Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>380</sup> Stiles, *The Destruction in Art Symposium*, 199-201.

curatorial proposal.<sup>381</sup> This manuscript gives insight into the whole event as experienced by a witness and includes a description of Davies' lecture as follows:

he traced four stage route from representation that began with innovation in the subject matter (courbet's realism) that continued by investigation of the methodology of this new subject matter (impressionism: realism as light) to eventually reach autonomy of the subject matter (direct confrontation of the object itself: objet trouves collages assemblages) & that ultimately but a shift of attention transferred this appreciation on to the environmental nonart of our immediately surrounding world (eg aesthetic appreciation of objects like African masks hitherho collected for purely ethnographic interested). [...] absorbing this analysis – looking at the screened images often shown without comment (duchamp – dust latham – books Metzger-cardboards a broken window tinguely drawing-machine a boxed arrangement of possessions by a psychopath a mechanical 18<sup>th</sup> c unclothed puppet) - & listening to infolded quotes (newspapers & manifestos) & to the disc of tinguely's homage to newyork.<sup>382</sup>

Following his description Houédard gives an impression of Davies' presentation as a performance lecture when he says that 'I was involved at one level by the sheer precision of this eyeear tencnique [sic] – at another by needing to coordinate it with my own analysis – selfdestruction [sic] as the ultimate interiorisation of the object.'<sup>383</sup> The method that Houédard calls an 'eyeear' technique refers to the experience of the lecture as an audio-visual collage of the artist's reading over a looped slide projection and the sound of Jean Tinguely's performance with a self-destroying machine called *Homage to New York* (1960).<sup>384</sup>

To exhibit this performance lecture in *Silent Explosion*, I proposed that we re-create the experience of it as audio-visual environment by projecting slides on loop on the walls above the stairs and juxtapose these with the simultaneous playback of the sound of

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<sup>381</sup> I have transcribed the manuscript here as in the document including spelling and punctuation. Parts of this document were published in the August issue of *Art and Artists* (1966) under the title "The Aesthetics of a Death Wish". The full manuscript is catalogued in Box 1, the Ivor Davies DiA Archive.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> *Homage to New York* was a self-destroying machine by Jean Tinguely (1925-1991) that performed for 27 minutes during a public performance for invited guests at the Sculpture Garden of the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1960. In an interview Davies remarks that Tinguely's work influenced his practice particularly as 'a kind of performance work which did not involve the artist'. See Roms, "Origins," 22.

Tinguely's machine and Davies's recorded voice from speakers positioned in the corners. This mode of presentation allowed us to present the historical lecture as an experiential event, and reconstruct its intangible materiality (such as the sound of the clicking noise of slides or Tinguely's machine juxtaposed with the artist's own voice) as well as the 'eyear' technique that the historical spectator experienced. To make a connection with the event in 1966, while clearly stating the difference to it, I proposed that we exhibit the material archive as part of this environment, including Houédard transcription of the 1966 discussion, Davies' poster for the event, and Metzger's letter to Davies in preparation for the symposium. I wanted to display these documents in a standing vitrine in the space, so people could read them while experiencing the remediated lecture-performance. While most part of this proposal was realised in the actual exhibition – including the display in the vitrine, the projection of slides on loop, and the recording of Davies reading his performance lecture in 2015 – the museum had reservation about the cacophony of sounds created by Tinguely's self-destructive machine and Davies' voice over it. Not having these contradicted my idea of a performative environment but given that the sound could not be contained in the space without also disrupting another installation in Gallery 21 we needed to find another solution. At the end, the sound of Tinguely's work was left out, and Davies' voice was played only on headphones. The visitors could choose to watch the slide show with or without listening to the lecture (see Figures 19-21).

#### **4.3.2.3      Gallery 21: Adam on St. Agnes' Eve 1968/2015**

Davies' 1968 multimedia 'experimental theatre' event, *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*,<sup>385</sup> became particularly significant in the exhibition at AC-NMW as an early example of performance art

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<sup>385</sup> All documents relating to this event are catalogued in Box 9, the Ivor Davies Dia Archive.

in Wales, and the only performance of Davies' in the 1960s that was shown in Wales. The work is one of the artist's latest performances from between 1966 and 1968, that in many ways exemplifies Davies' artistic approaches to his more theatrical body of work at the time (see my discussion of these works in 4.1.1.1.). That this performance has an extensive archive created an opportunity to explore the Museum's capacity to remediate a multimedia and participatory event for contemporary spectators.

I gathered information about this performance both from Heike Roms' 2006 oral history interview with the artist on 12 October 2006,<sup>386</sup> and from the documents in the archive. The performance happened sometime between 7:30 and 8:05 pm on the 21 January, 1968, in the Debates Chamber of the University College Swansea as part of the University's Arts Festival. It included simultaneous projections of slides and film footage, synchronised and manually controlled light and sound effects, and live actions. Performers included the almost naked male and female figures of 'Adam and Eve', a 'surgeon' and his assistant, a pianist, several members of a rock-n-roll band, people moving around wearing cardboard boxes, as well as the spectators who became participants by engaging with the performance.<sup>387</sup> According to the remaining cue sheets,<sup>388</sup> the actions were to be structured around explosions, these, however, as Davies and Plant explained to me, did not happen in the actual event (see 4.2.2.). In my follow-up conversations with the artist, I focused on discussing the present materiality of the work and how this materiality could be exhibited

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<sup>386</sup> Roms, "An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales. In conversation with Ivor Davies" [video recording], 12 October 2006. (*What's Welsh for Performance?* Aberystwyth University archive). An edited transcript from the interview was also published in Roms, "Remembering Adam on St Agnes' Eve," 112-118.

<sup>387</sup> Individuals mentioned in documents to be at the event are John Plant (organiser of the Festival), Ivor Davies, Graham Robertson, Phil Thomas, Neil Bowman, and participants Mary and Ian, Kay, Denny, Brian Clark, Derek Brake, Lois Turner, John Phillips, Ian Breakwell, Jackie Breakwell, and the members of the 98% Mom & Apple Pie West Coast Rock and Roll Band (Paul Barrett, Nigel Lewis, Ricky Lewis, Ricard Macaethy, John Donnelly, Cyril Petherick, Jefferey Oliver, Robert Llewellyn, Robert Peterson. All documents relating to this event are catalogued in Box 9, Ivor Davies Dia Archive.

<sup>388</sup> There are four versions of cue sheets in the archive showing slight changes in Davies' plans for the event.

(and potentially collected later).

During the cataloguing of Davies' archive I have experienced first-hand what Heike Roms describes as the 'deeply contingent nature of both documentation and memory' where artists 'don't remember or remember differently certain details of their past work that are revealed by the documentation.'<sup>389</sup> I was interested therefore in exploring how we could maintain the material identity of the historical performance in the exhibition while being aware of, and accepting, the malleability of its archive. Based on my understanding of media art preservation in museum environment (see particularly the Variable Media Approach in Chapter 2) and following my research into performative archiving and curatorial strategies (see Chapter 2 and 3), I proposed that parallel to exhibiting the material archive of the 1968 event (documents in the Ivor Davies DiA Archive), we would also reinterpret the work through two approaches. The first was a form of 'remediation' (see Chapter 2) whereby we (Davies, curators and other museum staff) collaboratively define the present material formation of the historical performance by embracing its 'spirit' and 'essence' rather than its historical appearance, but adjusted to the gallery context; the second was to commission a 're-performance' or reinterpretation by another performance artist, Mike Pearson, whose interest in reinterpretation I already knew about (and that I discuss further in 4.3.3.). Davies was open to enabling my research to explore in practice how such processes of reinterpretation might change the artwork's materiality, experience, and, consequently, its future understanding and collectability.

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<sup>389</sup> Roms, "Introduction. An Oral History of Performance Art in Wales," xi-xii.

Remediation seemed appropriate for presenting *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in the 2015 exhibition given that Davies himself applied this strategy in his 1968 performance, where he incorporated slides of Albrecht Dürer's painting of *Adam and Eve* (1504), and other iconic art historical imagery, and samples of pre-recorded sounds in his abstract audio-visual environment. Given this, my proposal to the artist was to remediate the work again in a form that adapts it to gallery context in a way that is also faithful to the work's fundamental conceptual and material properties, and experience as a multimedia performance environment. Davies stated that the work in 2015 – just like the work in 1966 – should feel like an environment in motion, created by changing light, sound and visual effects that surround spectators as they move in the space. In terms of the remediation of the technical elements, actions and props, Davies was open to creative solutions by curators, technicians and conservators, including using contemporary digital technology wherever possible.

The next step in the process was to persuade the artist to use his 1968 cue sheet, and not the remaining film documentation by Alan Brooks, as the starting point for the remediation (Figure 45). In so doing I aimed to distinguish between the idea of the performance and its historical materialisation at a certain moment in time (the 1968 event) thus enabling a new interpretation. While focusing on the cue sheet from 1968, I also wanted to give space for the artist to realise any intentions that might arise through rethinking the work in 2015. I gathered information about essential properties and variable elements in a document to be used by the exhibition team in the process of the work's remediation (Appendix 4.).

Davies was keen to incorporate the remaining object-relics from the 1968 event in the new remediated environment. This led to discussions of whether the function of remediation

is preservation or reinvention, leading to the issue of primacy that the authentic object traditionally enjoys in the Museum. Davies agreed that to create an experience of the artwork as performance environment, presenting the relics from 1968 as documentary evidence should be avoided. The relics in question were two cardboard boxes with collaged newspaper cuttings of ‘eyes’ and ‘lips’. These boxes were used in different performances in the 1960s and therefore were not unique to *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve*. In the 1968 event, they were moved around by performers and further animated with pre-recorded sounds (Figure 46). In 2014 the boxes were kept in the studio, stored flat, dismantled and wrapped in polythene (Figure 47). To use them in the remediated environment conservators, curators and the artist needed to work out together first how to return these objects back into being three-dimensional, and then re-form them as animated boxes to reflect their role in the 1968 performance. Davies was keen that the boxes should be cleaned up so they would look new, which was not only counter to his long-term interest in ‘destruction’ as obsolescence and material transformation, but also impossible as their aging was irreversible in the opinion of the paper conservator.<sup>390</sup> In the end the boxes were presented on a low plinth supported from inside by a metal pole to resemble the height of a male and female body. We placed speakers inside these bodies, which we used to animate the boxes according to Davies’ 1968 cue of ‘conversation on tape in words and sounds.’ The voice recording words and sounds – that we played through the speakers - took place in the artist’s studio in Penarth with Davies as male voice and Luned Aaron as female voice, who read words and sometimes sentences from random sources. The recording was then turned into a sound-collage by Rhordi Viney, Digital Content Assistant at AC-NMW, and played as part of a synchronised sound and light collage in the environment

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<sup>390</sup> Emily O’Reilly, Rose Miller, and Judit Bodor, “Curation, Conservation and The Artist in Silent Explosion, Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art,” *Studies in Conservation*, 61 (sup2 2016), 167-173. Also: Appendix 5 in this thesis.



(Figures 48, 49, 50).

Another challenge in the remediation process was how to adapt the idea for a thirty-five-minute long event to ‘gallery time.’<sup>391</sup> The artist was happy with the strategy of replacing manually-controlled sound, light and projection with a synchronised multi-screen visual, light and audio environment that we could repeat endlessly throughout the duration of the exhibition. To aid this work, I created a new cue sheet extracting light, sound and projection cues from 1968 to be used in the remediated environment. (see Appendix 4.) To reinterpret the more generic cues in the 1968 cue-sheet we worked creatively with the artist. For example, where the 1968 cue sheet said ‘tape of bird song’, we took the artist’s 2015 description of a sound ‘like a spring morning in the forest, not interrupted by any other noise’. Similarly, where the cue sheet said ‘children playing on the playground’, we followed Davies 2015 description of creating an ‘atmospheric sound, not too loud and without recognisable conversations.’<sup>392</sup> We also tried to resource the imagery that Davies appropriated and used for projections in the 1968 event. These included Albrecht Dürer’s 1504 *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve* and images of ‘male and female anatomical slides’ (Figure 51). The 1968 cue sheet also mentions a 16-mm film being projected on a screen at one point of the event, but Davies could not remember what the film was. Following discussion of what would be appropriate to replace the missing film, we decided to incorporate the film documentation of the 1968 event that Davies wanted to be central to the 2015 exhibition in any case. However, instead of presenting it as unique remain, the film became just a fragmentary element of the remediated environment (Figure 52).

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<sup>391</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and The Politics of Spectatorship* (London-New York: Verso, 2012), 231.

<sup>392</sup> These are from my notes from conversations with the artist throughout the remediation process.

The remediated multimedia environment was put together by Chris Harwick using QLab software.<sup>393</sup> The QLab cues follow the sound, light and projection cues of 1968, with the imagery and sound resourced in collaboration between technicians and curators following Davies' general descriptions. Such as in the original cue-sheet, in QLab a cue is a marker for an action to take place (Figure 53). In creating the remediated environment, I argued to keep the length of each action (sound, light and projection) the same as in 1968, so that spectators in 2015 would experience the length of the event in real time. This, for example, would have meant ten minutes of bird song played at the beginning with just red and blue spotlights moving around in the space. This would have been followed by two minutes of 'recorded silence' and 'blackout'.<sup>394</sup> While I was interested how the sound of 'recorder silence' might sound in the large gallery space with the spectators moving around, both the Museum, as well as the artist, strongly felt that this would mean showing 'nothing', potentially confusing spectators who might think that the installation doesn't work. At the end, some of the cues from the 1968 cue-sheet were cut out, while others that were considered too long and shortened resulting in the remediated installation being only of approximately 14-minutes duration.

Regarding the actions of performers, there was a possibility of inviting new performers to perform the 1968 instructions within the remediated environment at certain times during the exhibition, but Davies was not keen on replacing the artists involved in the 1968 event, including Ian Breakwell as a surgeon reading loudly and cutting the projection

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<sup>393</sup> QLab is a multimedia playback software created by a company based in Baltimore, Maryland, known as Figure 53, <https://figure53.com/qlab/> (accessed 15 September 2016).

<sup>394</sup> The version of the cue sheet we used has been published in Roms, *Silent Explosion*, 122-123.

screen at certain moments; and Derek Brake and Jackie Breakwell who – as Adam and Eve – stood naked in the projection light casting their shadows on the screens behind them with art historical imagery and a film presented simultaneously. The 1968 cue-sheet also included instructions for amateur performers (hired locally at the time) to play the piano at certain moments, and to move around wearing boxes, and asked spectators to wear paper bags on their heads. In the remediated version, these latter actions were reinterpreted by allowing spectators' engagement with the objects including playing the replica piano, moving around boxes or walking around wearing paper bags on their heads (Figures 54, 55).<sup>395</sup> The remediated version thereby adapted the artwork to the architecture of the gallery and the duration of the exhibition by using a mix of relics and replica elements and focusing on the viewers' experiential encounter with the kinetic environment.

#### **4.3.3 'Re-modelling': Adam on St. Agnes' Eve at 1:25**

My second curatorial strategy – developed in parallel to the remediation outlined above – was to commission performance artist Mike Pearson to revisit *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* from the vantage point of today, using the work's archive as his starting point. In this commission, I was interested in exploring how a performance artwork might be transmitted to the present through a new performance. Pearson's experience in site-specific performance, and his long-standing interest in what he calls 'theatre/archaeology' seemed particularly relevant when approaching the theatrical characteristics of Davies' multimedia experimental event.

Theatre/archaeology, which Pearson has been developing in collaboration with archaeologist Michael Shanks since 1999,<sup>396</sup> presents an interdisciplinary methodological framework

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<sup>395</sup> Video documentation of the final remediated environment is available online at [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive).

<sup>396</sup> Related publications include Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre / Archaeology: Disciplinary Dialogues* (Routledge, 2001); and Mike Pearson, *Mickery Theater: An Imperfect Archaeology* (Amsterdam

within which to interpret the past without speculating on the artist's intentions or the past meaning of the artwork. Rather, the method 're-articulates' the material remains of the historical events in 'real-time' through creating from them a new performance.<sup>397</sup> While theatre/archaeology is still concerned with the archive, it has an intentionally non-representational relationship to the past, and in that sense as a process it is closer to the idea of remediation than to re-enactment. This method was particularly interesting to my research. It enabled the exploration of two different approaches to presenting the same historical performance within the same exhibition that are comparable in providing alternatives to the customary documentary display of archival material.

Inspired by AC-NMW's collection of dioramas,<sup>398</sup> as well as by model-making traditions in theatre and crime reconstructions,<sup>399</sup> Pearson proposed to creatively 'remodel' the whole set of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in miniature (on the scale of 1:25), to study – albeit in miniature – the artwork's material identity, and then re-perform it in front of a live audience. To start his research, Pearson was interested in visiting the venue of the 1968 performance, so I invited him to join the site visit to Swansea University that I organised for Davies, John Plant and I initially to conduct interviews about *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* for my

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University Press, 2014); "Theatre/archaeology – return and prospect", in *Art and Archaeology: Collaborations, Conversations, Criticisms*, eds. Ian Alden Russell, and Andrew Cochrane (New York: Springer Nature, 2014), 199-230; *Marking Time: performance, archaeology and the city* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2013); "Neither here nor there... let's talk about adult matters", in Giannachi, Kaye, Shanks, *Archaeologies of Presence*, 257-272.

<sup>397</sup> See Michael Shanks, "Theatre/Archeology," *Mshanks.com*, <http://www.mshanks.com/theatrearchaeology/> (accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>398</sup> Although these dioramas are in storage now, Pearson remembers that in the 1970s they were displayed in the same galleries that is now the Contemporary Wing of National Museum Cardiff, where *Silent Explosion* was also exhibited. Mike Pearson, Introduction to *Adam on St Agnes' Eve at 1:25*, 21 January 2016.

<sup>399</sup> Pearson particularly mentioned the Theatre Course at Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, where students still learn 3D model making by hand, and the 'Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Deaths' by Frances Lee Glessner, a series of miniature crime reconstructions that is still used for the training detectives. *Conversations with Mike Pearson*, 2015.

own research (see 4.2.2).<sup>400</sup> Before this joint visit to Swansea, I also arranged a meeting between Ivor Davies and Pearson on 20 April 2015 to look at the material archive together. Attended also by Heike Roms and Nicholas Thornton, the meeting became a collective archiving exercise that revealed the gaps between the artist's memory, the material archive and the knowledge of the researchers.<sup>401</sup> In the meeting Davies remembered the performance venue (Swansea Union's Debates Chambers) as a large space on the ground floor of the University's Science Building. However, based on documents in the archive (floor plan and photographs), photographs of other performances that happened in the space (such as Ian Breakwell's *Unword*, October 30, 1970) and an email correspondence with the University's Estates and Facilities Department,<sup>402</sup> we located the venue on the fourth floor of the Student Union building.<sup>403</sup>

Pearson collaborated with Anna Kelsey and Sebastian Noel, theatre design graduates from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, to create a 1:25 model based on the meticulous analysis of the floorplan of the venue, measuring its architectural details, and forensic exploration of the remaining film and photo documentation and cue sheets from 1968 to create an exact scale model of every element of the work, including the props and furniture, technical elements, the light and sound and participants (Figures 56, 57). The creative process of developing the performance using the miniature model needed a larger group of collaborators, for which Pearson invited sound designer Sam Barnes and performers Richard Huw Morgan and John Rowley. The group together tested the possibility of all of

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<sup>400</sup> Locating the room within the building was possible through the documents held in Davies's archive as cross-referenced with the building's current floorplans, to which I got access with help from the university. The Debates Chambers in 2015 had been used as an office space of the University's Estates Department, which unfortunately we could not access on the day of the site visit due to flooding. The interview therefore needed to be filmed in a similar room but a floor below.

<sup>401</sup> Sound recording of the discussion is available online at [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive).

<sup>402</sup> Particularly Shona Vrac-Lee and Rhia Cullen.

<sup>403</sup> I was in contact with Swansea University's estates and facilities department, as well as with the Student Union throughout March and April 2015.

Davies' instructions in real-time, including the actions that were planned on the cue sheet but left out from the 1968 event, such as the explosions. The miniature performance took place on 21 January 2016 – the anniversary of the historical event – in Gallery 22 surrounded by the traditionally displayed documentary archival material of the Ivor Davies DiA Archive (discussed in 4.3.2.1.) Standing around the model, Pearson introduced the event then the group re-performed *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in real time by manipulating the miniature props and figures on the model and using a micro-camera to plot a journey that would track an 'original' viewer's movement through the space. The live feed from the camera was projected onto the wall, temporarily replacing the documentation of Davies' performances in the archival display, so that the audience, seated around the model, could watch the 'live' documentation of the miniature performance and experience the performers actions around the table at the same time. Once the miniature performance was over, the 1:25 architectural model, with the props arranged according to the last scene of the event, was carried from Gallery 22 to Gallery 21 to complete the remediated archival environment of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, and remained on display throughout the exhibition (Figures 58, 59, 60, 61).

#### **4.3.4 Event-curating: Public seminars as extended research and evaluation**

In the same way as remediation and remodelling were integral to my curatorial research into how historical performance can be exhibited in museum context, I explored the exhibition itself as the site of research through a series of discursive seminars. These events were also staged in Gallery 22, and we used the wall space allocated in the exhibition to presenting film documentation of Davies' performances to show visual material relating to the seminars. Thus, the seminars, similarly to the miniature performance before (i.e. the live feed from the miniature camera), temporarily became physically a part of the exhibition. The discursive

events were free and open to anybody who wanted to participate in discussing issues raised by and through the exhibition. or just wanted to know more about how curators and conservators work. They happened in addition to adult and family education programme that the museum organised,<sup>404</sup> and events developed around the content of the artworks on display.<sup>405</sup> The content of the seminars was informed by my experience of working with AC-NMW team and addressed the issues of preparing an exhibition of artworks that do not exist as art objects. Each event lasted for two hours, and together they were promoted as a series under the title *Exhibition Matters*. Each seminar had a similar structure: it began with me proposing some questions around the topic of the seminar, followed by a discussion with guest speakers who shared their thoughts or experience in response to the proposed questions. Attendees at the seminar were encouraged to contribute to the discussion. Ivor Davies was also invited to attend as a contributor but without being a guest presenter. This was important from the perspective of my research in which Davies' practice was a central reference point but that went beyond the concerns of the particular exhibition to explore more general questions around the relationship between contemporary museum practice and historical time-based artworks.

For the first seminar, 'Conservation Conversation: How to 'conserve' material transformation and destruction?' on 25 February 2016, I invited the two museum conservators who worked on *Silent Explosion*, Emily O'Reilly, Principal Conservator Paper, and Rose Miller, Senior Easel Paintings Conservator (Figures 62, 63, 64). During the production of the exhibition we became co-researchers on questions arising from the conservation of Davies' destruction works, which led to a co-authored conference paper and

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<sup>404</sup> Educational programme included for example Family Art Workshops, 16-19 February 2016.

<sup>405</sup> For example, "Art Lunchtime Talk: Ivor Davies Discussing Language, Politics and Art", 15 January 2016.

publication at the *Journal of Conservation* (Appendix 5.) The seminar was therefore an opportunity to publically rehearse and discuss the issues we wanted to raise in our joint paper. A central question of this event was how conservators and curators can deal with the ‘changeability’ of destruction art in the context of exhibitions. Using examples from *Silent Explosion*, including paintings such as *Red Feeling*, and performances such as *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve*, we discussed how artworks that were conceived as intentionally ‘auto-destructive’ might undergo transformation while moving them from studio into the exhibition space. Questions I placed on the agenda were how the status of the ‘object’ is understood differently in painting and in performance; how decisions are made between the artist, curators and conservators in the context of an exhibition regarding the protection of destructive artworks; and how the decisions made in exhibitions influence the spectators’ perception of the artist and his artworks.

The second seminar on March 3 2016 was ‘Remembering Performance – Performing Memory: Using Oral History to Document Performance Histories’ with Heike Roms, whose research on Davies was an important source in my work, and whose performative approach to disseminating historical events through publically staged oral history events inspired my thinking (Figures 65, 66, 67). The questions we discussed in this event related to the differences or similarities between oral history and an artist interview; the relative importance of the artist’s voice in interpretation; the importance of being in the historical location in oral history events; the role of the audience in public oral history events; and the interviewer’s influence on the interviewee’s interpretation of events. Although oral history was not heavily present in *Silent Explosion*, it was a method I explored in my research and that influenced my curatorial approach. (see 4.3.2). Furthermore, extracts from my interview with Ivor Davies and John Plant were also made available in the exhibition to visitors as contextual material.



The third seminar on March 10, 2016 was entitled ‘Towards Silent Explosion: Curatorial Dilemmas, processes and decisions in exhibiting historical performance’. This was an opportunity for Nicholas Thornton and me to discuss in public the exhibition-making process in public from a curatorial perspective (Figures 68, 69). The conversation about the role of a curator as creative agent is important given that performance art only exists as and when ‘exhibited’ (performed or in later archival form), as opposed to art objects that exist in a storage or in an artist studio between exhibitions. In other words, in performance art – similarly to installation – the exhibition is the medium through which these works materialise. In this event, Thornton and I discussed our collaborative curatorial process with the artist, our approach to the Davies archive compared to other models of exhibitions that we discussed throughout the research, and finally how my research fed into our curatorial work.

The first conversation exposed the differences between the practice of conservators, which focuses on the physical qualities of artworks, and the practice of curators, which focuses mostly on the aesthetic qualities of artworks and their experience. However, we all agreed that working together on *Silent Explosion* had helped us appreciate our different perspectives. Rose Miller, for example, explained that while looking at the physical condition of Davies’ paintings in 2015, her first thought was to fix the decaying parts that she considered as damage, but that she rethought her approach after learning that these paintings had been selected for the exhibition due to their intentionally auto-destructive behaviour as examples of Davies’ interest in material transformation. Miller noted in the discussion that, ‘[W]ith *Falling* I listened to Judit and to Ivor and looked at the crumbling eggshells, which were beginning to flake from the painting, and decided they should be left as they were. The painting should continue to age. Painting as performance - a decaying work.’<sup>406</sup> Another

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<sup>406</sup> Rose Miller’s notes for the seminar sent to the author on 23 February 2016.

discussion point was whether change can be considered as a positive value in conservation practice. While I was aware of the discourse around changeability in the field of new media preservation (as discussed in Chapter 2), the AC-NMW conservators who work mainly with paper and traditional art objects could give us insight into their experience. In response to this question Emily O'Reilly brought up the example of 'kintsugi', a Japanese technique used to repair ancient pottery. This technique treats breakage and signs of previous repair as part of the history of an object, rather as something to disguise. Often the value of an object rises with more signs of repair, which is often done by using gold or other very valuable material. Rose Miller on the other hand argued that in Western conservation practice painting conservators also 'wouldn't attempt to return to the 'original' by returning the browned greens to their original colour, or re-instating van Gogh's faded red lakes' – albeit added that the signs of any repair might be disguised in exhibitions to present the works seemingly unchanged. However, she added, that from her personal experience, '[T]he change that we don't entirely accept (...) are the changes unfortunately caused by the insensitivity of past treatments by previous generations of artists and restorers.'<sup>407</sup>

The second seminar with Heike Roms was particularly useful for analysing the edited film that had been made from my interviews with Davies and John Plant (see 4.3.2.) for presentation in the exhibition and understanding how my decisions around the film relate to oral history practice. The film was edited by me, with technical help from Rhodri Viney (AC-NMW) from two half-hour long interviews down to one five-minute long montage with excerpts and still images illustrating the interview. The edited version<sup>408</sup> was then presented

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<sup>407</sup> Quotes by O'Reilly and Miller here are extracted from their notes for the discussion given to me before the event.

<sup>408</sup> The film is available online on *YouTube.com*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpVhKVueM-U>.

in the stairwell area on iPads, which are usually used by the museum for displaying contextual material (see Figure 43). This mode of presentation was counter to my curatorial idea to present the long version of the interviews, only slightly edited, and on monitors in Gallery 21 as part of the remediated archival installation. The reason I wanted to display the material as raw as possible was to emphasise the differences between Davies's and Plant's witness narratives that became apparent at the time. This idea was not supported by AC-NMW for different reasons: on the one hand, staff usually involved with exhibitions in these galleries argued that contextual, additional and educational material needed to be edited to be presentable and that, according to AC-NMW's policy, such contextual material should not be longer than 5 minutes. On the other hand, the film needed subtitles in Welsh in accordance with the museum's rules, which was expensive and time consuming, and for which we had neither human nor financial resources. These were arguments made based on best practice in the museum, which made it necessary to cut the interviews. Regarding the position of the film in the exhibition, I also had a different idea to the museum staff. I wanted to present the edited film in Gallery 21 near the remediated archival installation; however, there was no monitor available given our already heavy use of monitors across the galleries. In the discussion, I asked Heike Roms to respond to my work with the interviews. She agreed that conducting the interview on the historical venue provided a unique occasion for a reunion between Davies and Plant after nearly fifty years, and acted as a trigger to remember collectively. We then discussed my approach to documenting the interview, in which I removed myself from the image. Although I did this so the footage was easier to edit, in retrospect my decision to sit behind the camera while asking the questions turned an event that was planned as a conversation into a more mono-directional artist interview. Also, while heavy editing was deemed necessary for the exhibition, Heike Roms noted that this would not be an approach generally endorsed by oral historians.

Finally, in the third seminar Nicholas Thornton focused on discussing research and the potential of the exhibition as a mode and site of curatorial research, rather than as something that happens in preparation for exhibitions. Exhibition-as-research or curating-as-research is particularly risky for museums as curatorial decisions are guided by findings as the research progresses and cannot be fixed in advance of the exhibition. However, Thornton emphasised how my approach to exhibition-as-research allowed a rethinking of how historical performance is collected, preserved, and presented. We discussed the unique opportunity of the context of the CDA to work with a living artist and artworks that are not yet in collections. In collection-based exhibitions, how the work has been collected necessarily defines and fixes the possibilities of future exhibitions. In our case, however, a research-based curatorial approach to historical artworks was possible because we had two years with Ivor Davies to explore possibilities around the exhibition of historical performance art without any commitment from either the artist or museum for the work to be collected.

#### **4.3.5 Reflection**

Through the curatorial strategies of remediation and re-performance in the case of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, I introduced a mode of presenting historical performance art that questioned the primacy of the historical 1968 event as the artwork and presented the archive (documents, memories, interpretations) as its extended materiality. Furthermore, in both the remediated archival installation and the miniature performance the authenticity of the material remains was overridden in favour of authentically presenting the concept as revealed by the cue-sheets. The remediation was a collaborative process of production with Davies, based on our collective understanding of the material identity of the artwork and accommodating Davies'

changed intentions in the context of the exhibition. In comparison, Mike Pearson's idea for re-performance was based only on the material archive (rather than Davies' memories or intentions) and prioritised the authenticity of the performers' expression in interpreting the 1968 cue-sheet. While both remediation and re-performance integrated scenographic design with performance and used the 1968 score (cue-sheet) as the basis of (re)interpretation, they materialised the artwork very differently. Whilst the remediated archival environment was focusing on re-materialising the work's intangible archival elements of light, sound and projection, the re-performance foregrounded the work's spatial reproduction and the actions of the performers, albeit in miniature. The re-performance also articulated a complex indexical relationship on the one hand to another historical space and time, and on the other to the projected image on the screen, thus presenting the microcosm and macrocosm from inside and outside of the event at once. It also reintroduced the scale figure of the historical spectator as a performer whose actions could be followed by the contemporary spectator in the gallery by watching a projected video feed.

Both the remediation and the re-performance as strategies of re-presenting historical performance art raise questions about authorship, posterity and provenance in performance and highlight the fact that every re-materialisation of such work (then, now or in future) needs contributors, mediators and collaborators other than the artist (e.g. artists, curators, participants, conservators, technicians). In the case of the re-performance, Pearson got full credit for his variation of the performance; however, it remains a question whether his re-performance could ever be interpreted, exhibited or collected independently of Davies and his consent. In the case of the remediation, we tried to introduce the idea of collective production or multiple authorship in the wall-text that described the new environment as a collaboratively produced variation of the historical performance with the title *Adam on St*

*Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. However, after the exhibition, Davies chose to only keep the material archive from the 1968 event, while the replicas and the new multiscreen presentation sourced and created for the 2015 installation, including the new sound recordings created by Davies to animate the boxes, were discarded by the museum. This suggests that while a temporary exhibition might be an acceptable context for the artist to allow experimenting with forms of proliferative presentation, extending the life of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* in the case of the artwork's future collection, might not be a solution.

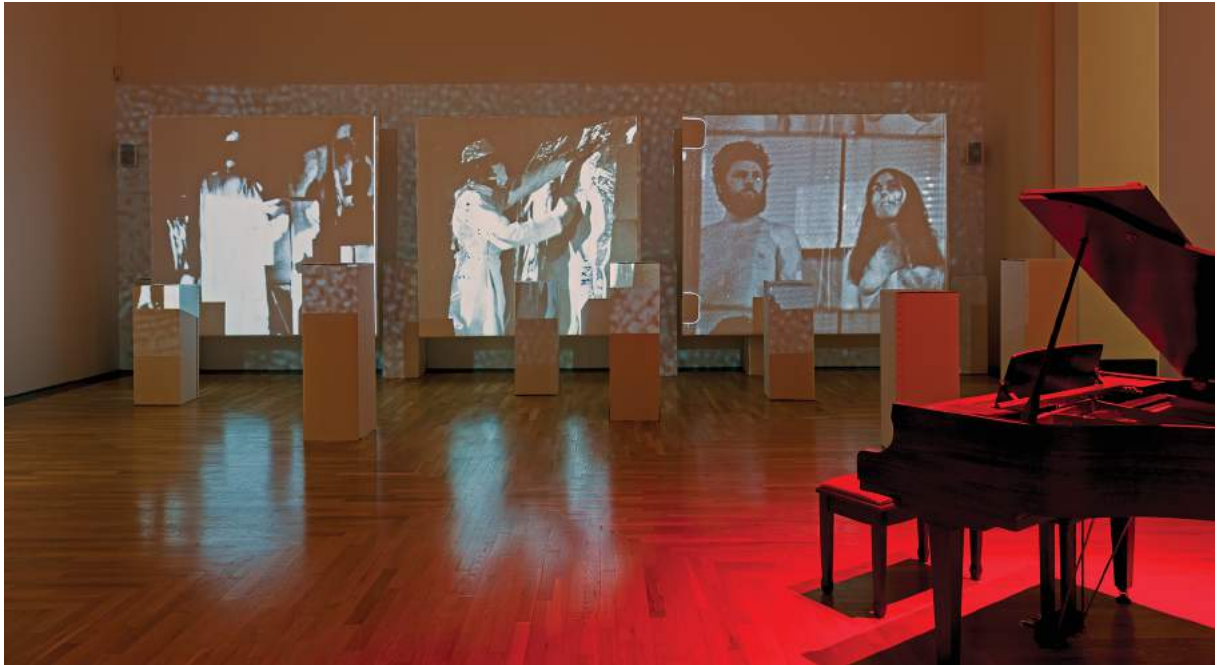


Figure 15: Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. Installation view. Gallery 21, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 – 2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 16: Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. Installation view. Gallery 21, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 - 2016. Photo ©AC-NMW



Figure 17: Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968/2015. Installation view, Gallery 21 in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 - 2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 18: Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968/2015. Installation view, Gallery 21 in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 - 2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.





Figure 19: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view. Stairwell, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 – 2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 20: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view. Stairwell, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 – 2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 21: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view. Stairwell, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015 – 2016. Photo ©AC-NMW



Figure 22: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view. Gallery 22, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.

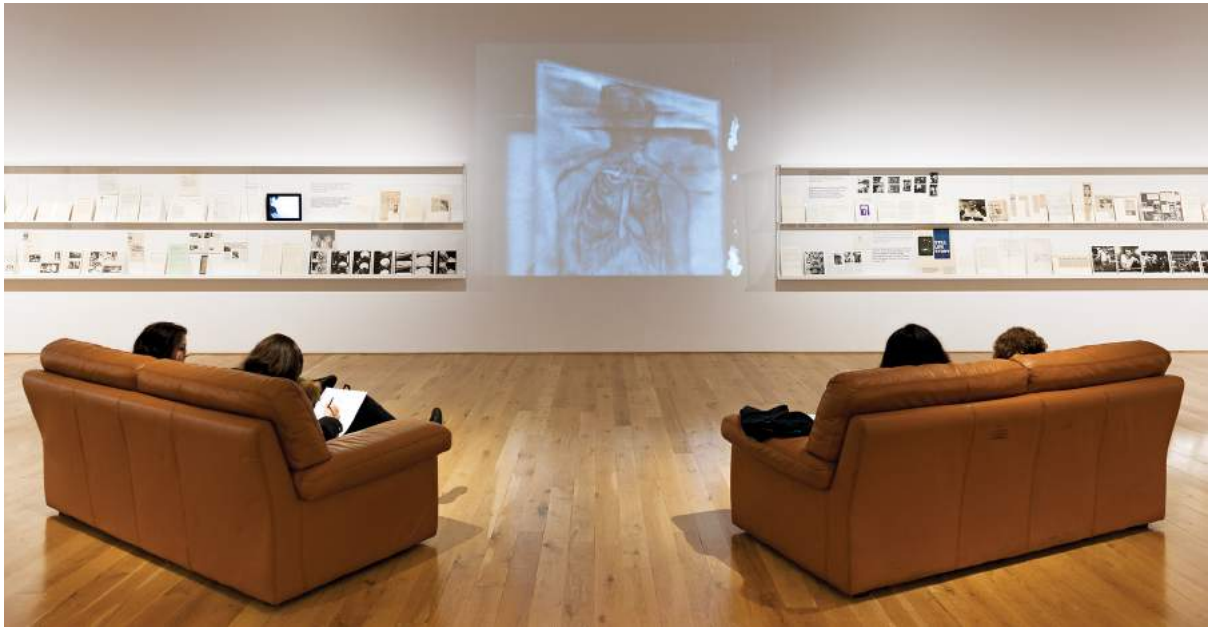


Figure 23: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view. Gallery 22, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 24: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view, Gallery 22, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.





Figure 25: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view, Gallery 22, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 26: *Ivor Davies Destruction in Art Archive*. Installation view, Gallery 22, *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.

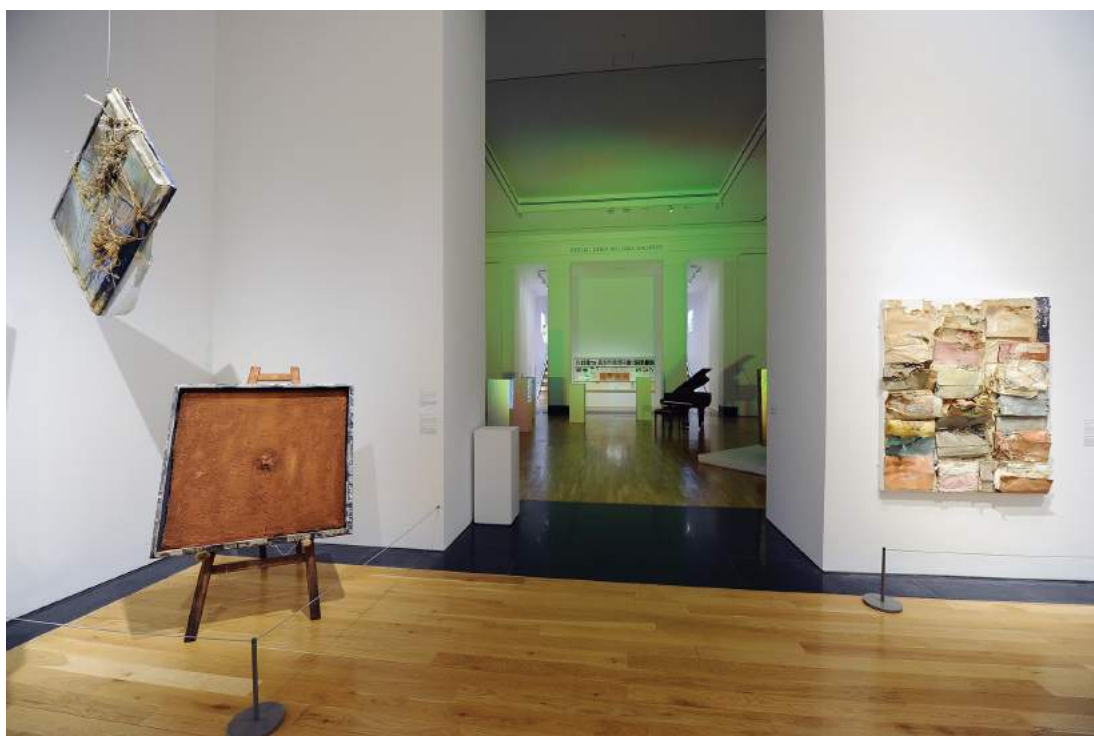


Figure 27: *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*. Installation view, Gallery 20, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 28: *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*. Installation view, Gallery 20. AC-NMW, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 29: *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*. Installation view, Gallery 24. AC-NMW, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 30: *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*. Installation view, Gallery 24. National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©AC-NMW.

*Figure 31 is not available online.  
Please refer to the hard-copy in the Aberystwyth University library.*

Figure 31: Ivor Davies prior to *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions*, Edinburgh, 1 September 1966.  
Photo ©Beaverbrook Newspapers, Edinburgh. Courtesy of Ivor Davies.

*Figure 32 is not available online.  
Please refer to the hard-copy in the Aberystwyth University library.*

Figure 32: *Anatomic Explosions*, DIAS, London, 13 September 1966. Photo ©Michael Broom.  
Courtesy of Ivor Davies.





In London Happenings festival, Welshman Ivor Davies stands beneath his complicated creation—a photograph of Robert Mitchum, an anatomical model and a department store dummy. Then he blows it up.

88



Life Magazine  
1967  
but he says I don't go  
ins to be ghaz  
be any good. If you enjoy a

Figure 33: Ivor Davies. *Anatomic Explosion*, September 13, 1966, as appeared in *Life Magazine*, 17 February 1967. Photo ©Michael Broom. Courtesy of Ivor Davies.





Figure 34: Ivor Davies, *Anatomic Explosion*. From *Ivor Davies*, as appeared in the catalogue *Ivor Davies*. Brno: Moravská Galerie, 2006, n.p. Photo ©Michael Broom. Courtesy of Ivor Davies.



Figure 35: Film documentation of Ivor Davies' 1960s performances. Exhibition view in *Ivor Davies*, Brno: Moravská Galerie, 2006. Photo ©Moravská Galerie, Brno. Courtesy of Ivor Davies.



Figure 36: Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, 1968. Exhibition view, *Ni allaf ddianc rhag hon (I Cannot Escape This Place)*, 2011-2012, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff. Photo ©AC-NMW.



Figure 37: Ivor Davies' archival collection of documents relating to DIAS and his performances between 1966-1968, Penarth, 2014. Photo ©Judit Bodor.





Figure 38: Mercury Theatre, Notting Hill, London, 2014. Photo ©Roddy Hunter.



Figure 39: The building where Better Books was in the 1960s, Charing Cross Road, London. 2014. Photo ©Roddy Hunter.



Figure 40: Africa Centre, Covent Garden, London, 2014. Photo ©Roddy Hunter.





Figure 41: Ivor Davies and Gustav Metzger, London, 11 November 2014. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 42: Ivor Davies and John Plant, Swansea University Student's Union, 20 April 2015. Photo ©Judit Bodor.

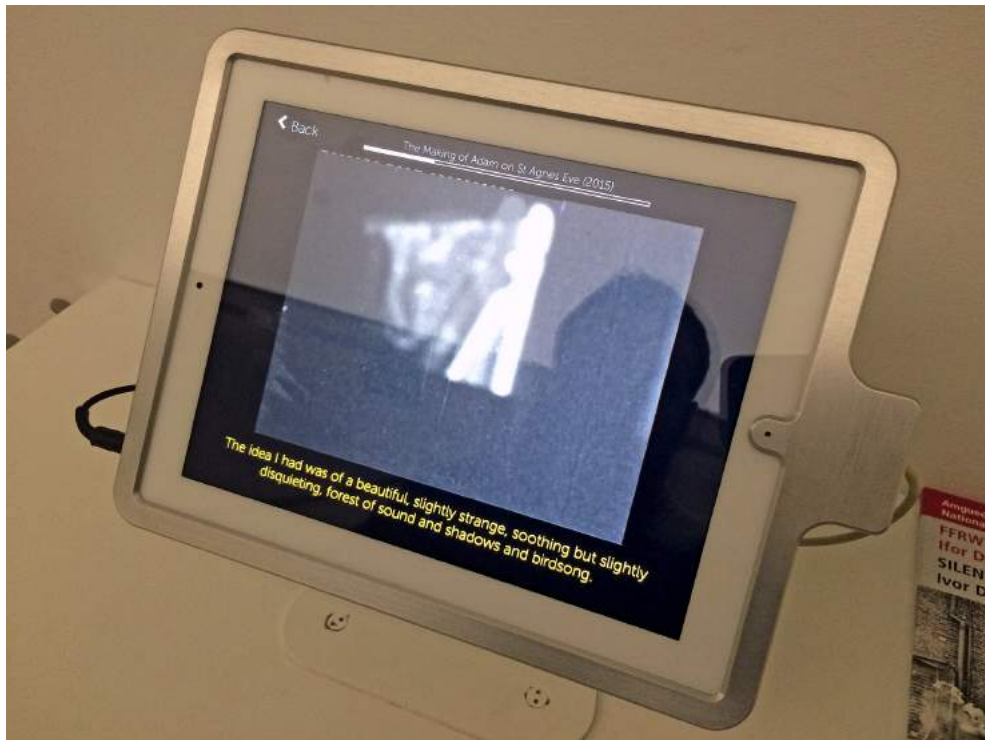


Figure 43: Judit Bodor: Interview with John Plant and Ivor Davies [edited film footage]. Installation view. Stairwell, *Silent Explosion*, National Museum Cardiff, 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.

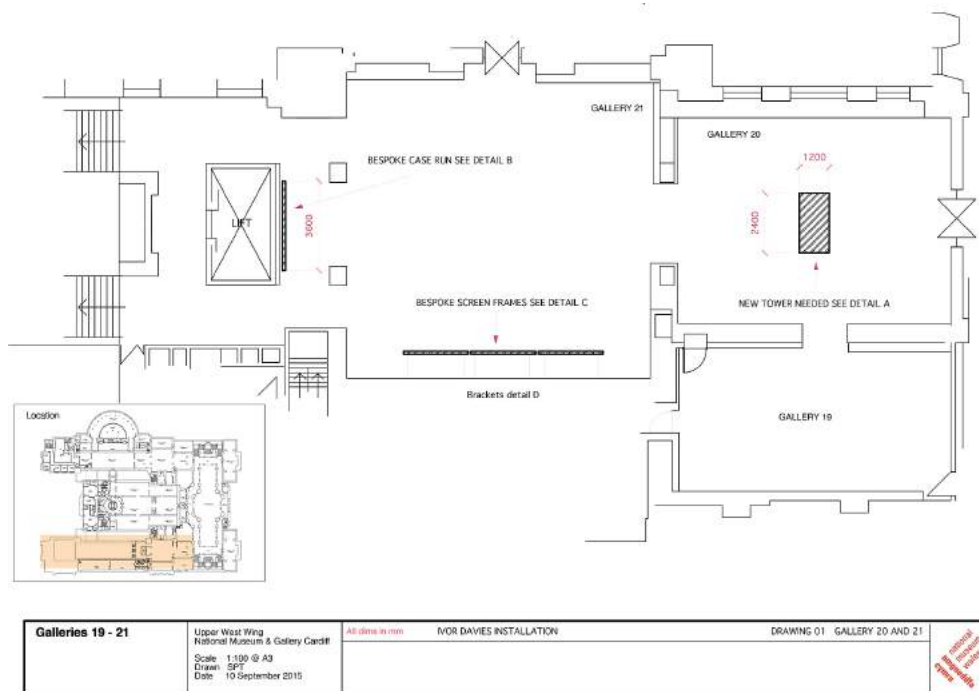


Figure 44: Simon Tozzo. Exhibition drawing for *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, Gallery 20 and 21. AC-NMW, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Shows the false wall planned in Gallery 20 to project the archival footage of an exploding atom bomb. ©Simon Tozzo & AC-NMW.

*Figure 45 is not available online.  
Please refer to the hard-copy in the Aberystwyth University library.*

Figure 45: Ivor Davies, cue sheet for *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, 1968, Swansea, 21 January 1968.  
©Ivor Davies.



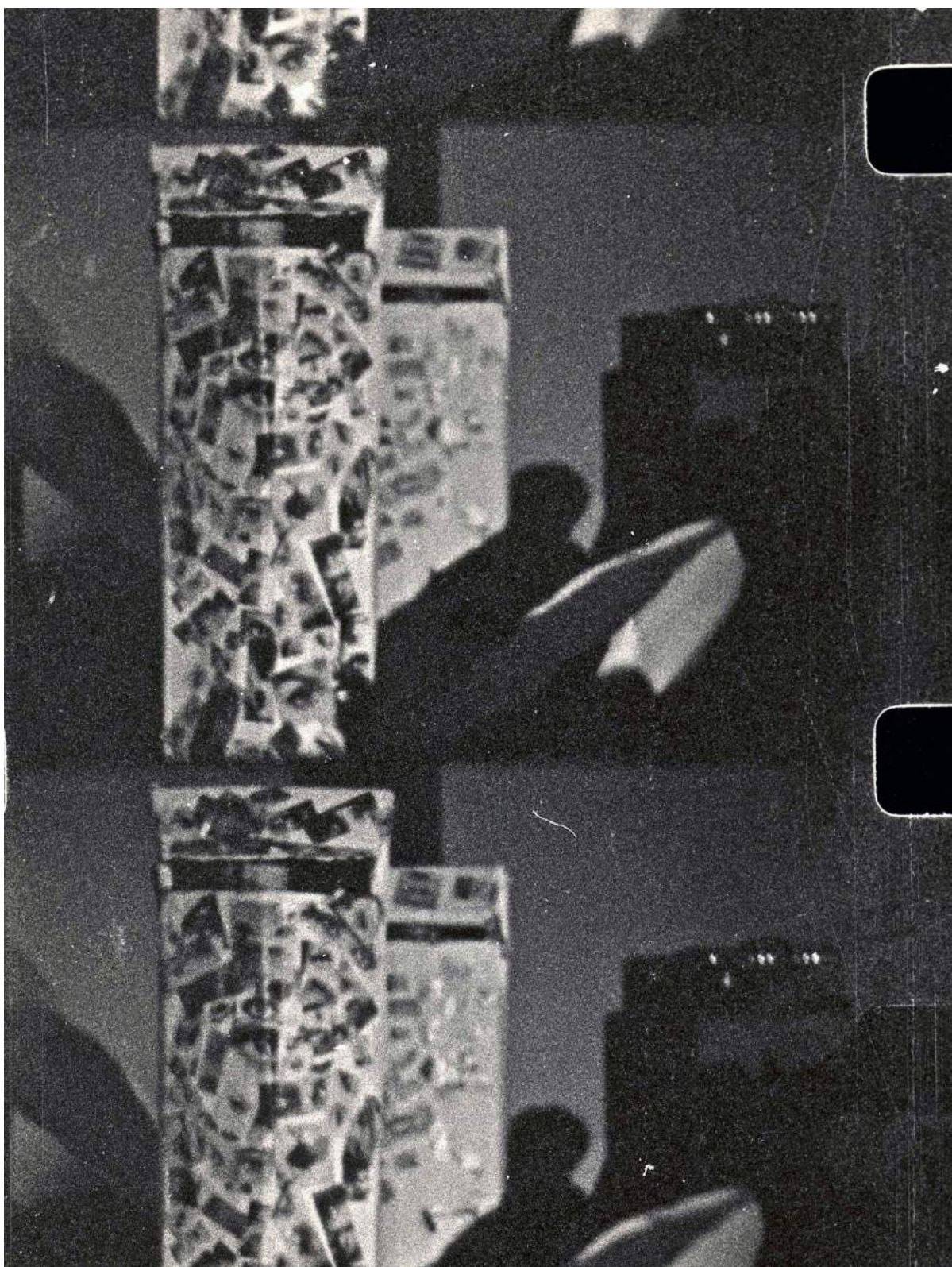


Figure 46: Film still from Ivor Davies: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968. Film: Alan Brooks. On loan at National Sound and Screen Archive Wales Collection. Photo ©Alan Brooks. Courtesy of Ivor Davies.



Figure 47: 'Eyes' and 'Lips' in Ivor Davies' Studio (with Emily O'Reilly, Paper Conservator), Penarth, 2014. Photo ©Judit Bodor.





Figure 48: Metal pole and the speakers used for the remediation of 'Eyes' and 'Lips' as 'talking boxes' in *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 49: Ivor Davies and Luned Aaron, Ivor Davies Studio, Penarth, 2 September 2015. Recording of male and female voices for the remediated 'Eyes' and 'Lips' in *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 50: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. Installation view of remediated 'Eyes' and 'Lips' boxes in *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.





Figure 51: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. Replica imagery (projected) and cardboard boxes  
 Installation view in *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo  
 ©Judit Bodor.

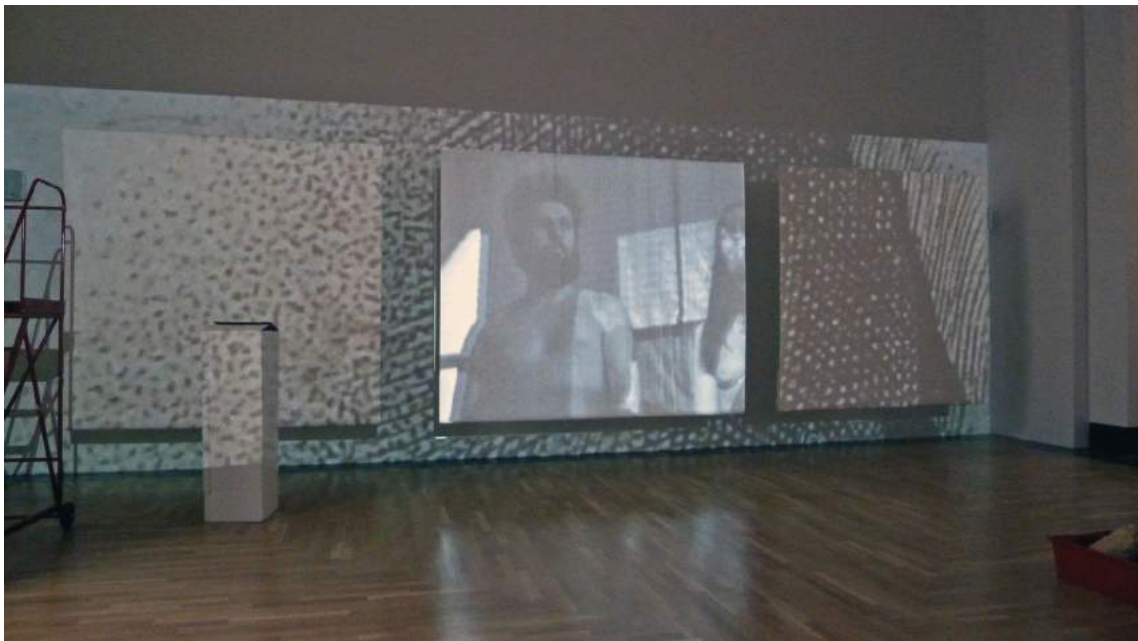


Figure 52: *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*. Installation view of screens with projection before  
 the exhibition. *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, AC-NMW, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016, Photo  
 ©Judit Bodor.

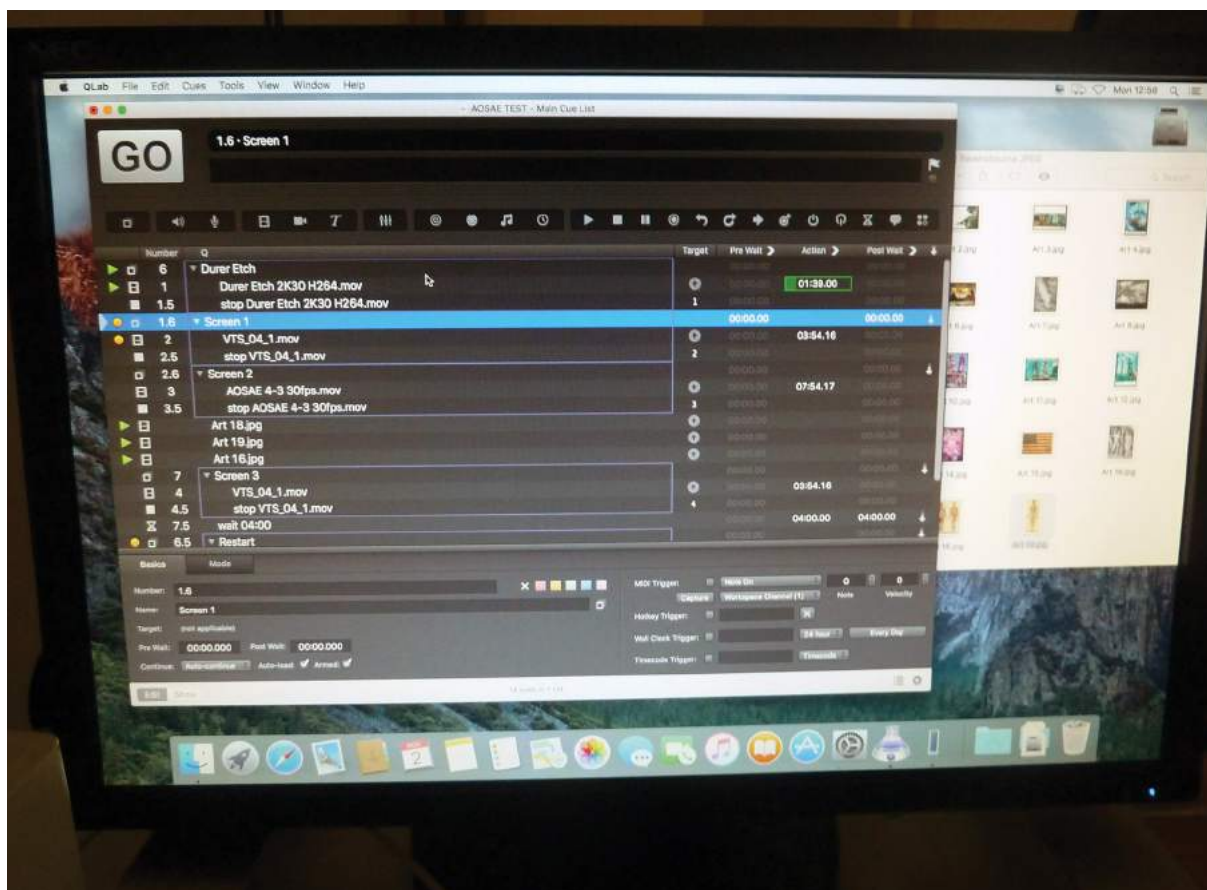


Figure 53: Chris Harwick. Q-Lab cues for the multimedia environment in *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015* in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



Figure 54: Spectator participation in *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015* in *Silent Explosion*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Judit Bodor.



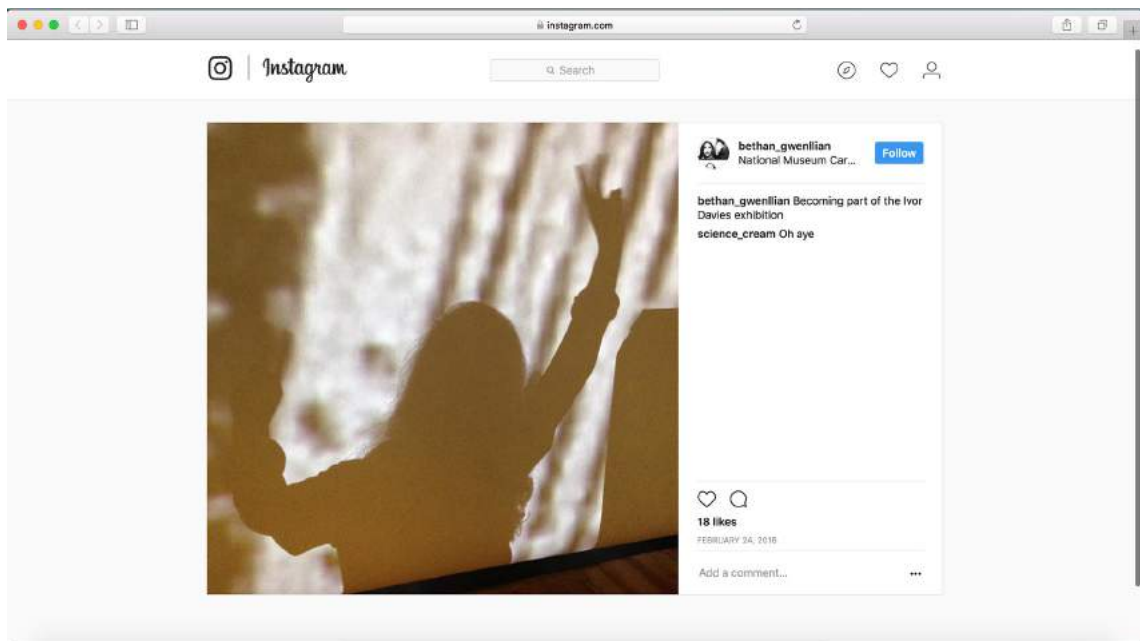


Figure 55: Spectator participation in *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015* in *Silent Explosio*, Gallery 21, National Museum Cardiff 2015-2016. Photo ©Bethan Gwenllian.



Figure 56: Sebastian Noel measuring the architectural details of the Debates Chamber at Swansea University for making a 1:25 model, 2015. Photo ©Anna Kelsey.





Figure 57: Anna Kelsey and Sebastian Noel. 1:25 scale model of the Debates Chamber at Swansea University. Photo ©Holly Heathcote.

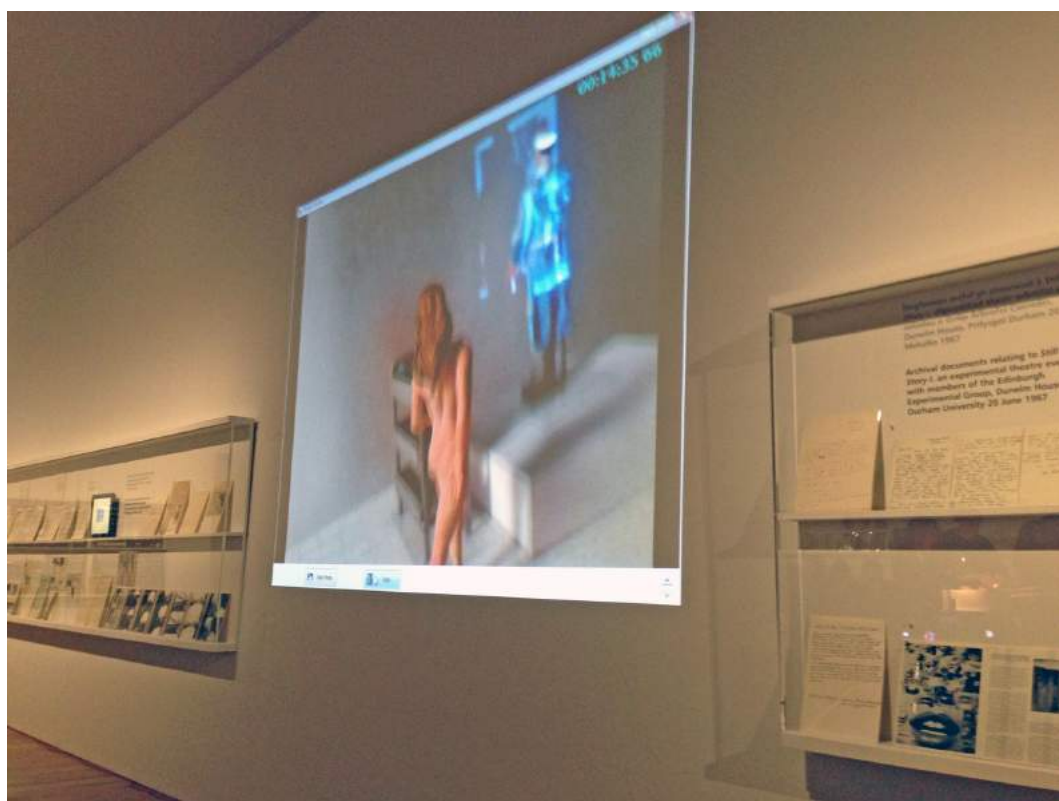


Figure 58: Mike Pearson. *Adam on St Agnes' Eve at 1:25*, 21 January 2016. Performance at National Museum Cardiff (with Sam Barnes, Anna Kelsey, Richard Huw Morgan, Sebastian Noel and John Rowley). Photo © Judit Bodor.



Figure 59: Mike Pearson. *Adam on St Agnes' Eve at 1:25*, 21 January 2016. Performance at National Museum Cardiff, (with Sam Barnes, Anna Kelsey, Richard Huw Morgan, Sebastian Noel and John Rowley). Photo © Judit Bodor.



Figure 60: Mike Pearson. *Adam on St Agnes' Eve at 1:25*, 21 January 2016. Performance rehearsal at National Museum Cardiff, (with Sam Barnes, Anna Kelsey, Richard Huw Morgan, Sebastian Noel and John Rowley), and photographer Holly Heathcote. Photo © Judit Bodor.

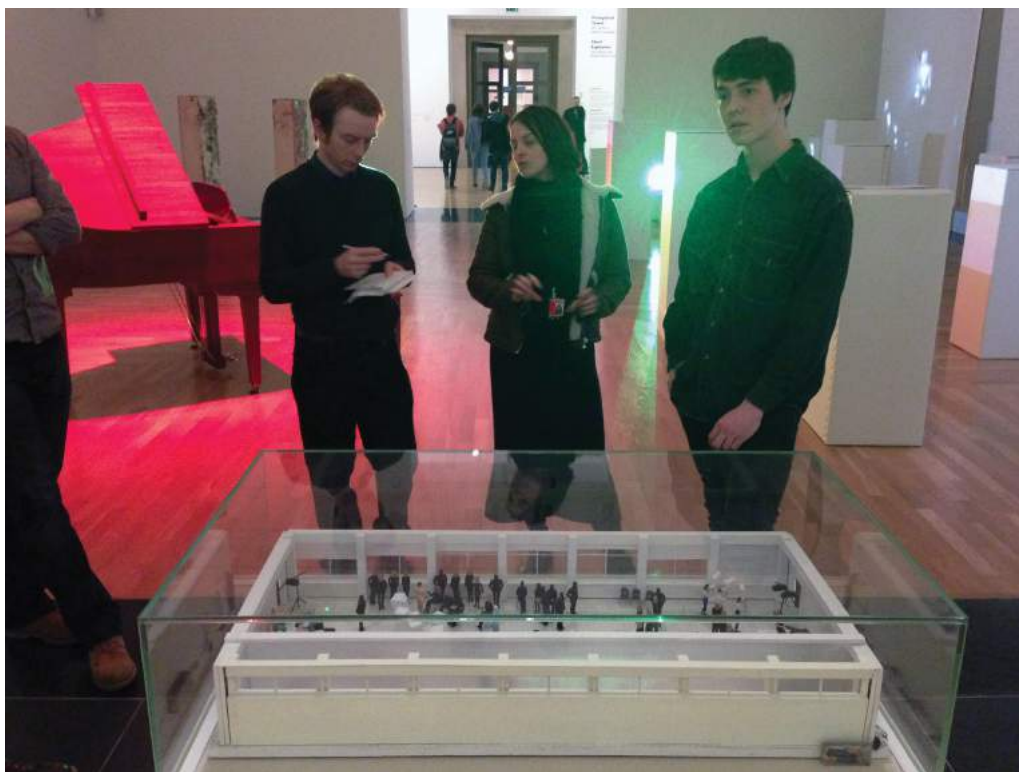


Figure 61: Nicholas Thornton, Judit Bodor and Sebastian Noel with the 1:25 model of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (with last scene frozen) as added to the remediated environment in Gallery 21, *Silent Explosion*, National Museum Cardiff. Photo © Roddy Hunter.



Figure 62: 'Conservation Conversation', with Emily O'Reilly and Rose Miller, 25 February 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter.





Figure 63: 'Conservation Conversation', with Emily O'Reilly and Rose Miller, 25 February 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter



Figure 64: 'Conservation Conversation', with Emily O'Reilly and Rose Miller, 25 February 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter



Figure 65: “Remembering Performance”, with Heike Roms, 4 March 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter.



Figure 66: ‘Remembering Performance’, with Heike Roms, 4 March 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter.



Figure 67: 'Remembering Performance', with Heike Roms, 4 March 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter.



Figure 68: 'Curatorial Challenges', with Judit Bodor and Nicholas Thornton, 10 March 2016, Gallery 22, National Museum Cardiff, Part of *Exhibition Matters*, series of three seminars curated by Judit Bodor at *Silent Explosion*. Photo © Roddy Hunter.



# CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

## 5.1. Introduction

The aim of the research has been to address the problems of exhibiting historical performance art in museum contexts, given the apparent incompatibility between the ephemeral and changeable material ‘identity’ of performance and the sense of permanence and longevity that underpin fine art museum practice. The focus on the preservation and exhibition of material residue remaining from the time of the performance’s unique historical conception that is common in collection-based exhibitions (see for example *Art Under Attack* or *Damage Control*, 2014, discussed in 2.3) implies the absence of the performative experience at the centre of the work, the neglect of intangible elements (such as light and sound installation and interaction), and the absence of the bodies of the artist and other performers and participants, including the spectator. How can that intangible, performative aspect of the work be recovered? And how can the contemporary viewer be brought to that aspect (albeit relocated in the present), if indeed we should do so at all? These questions are a development and refinement of the original research questions I formulated in the context of the AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA). The award enabled me to make a practice-led contribution toward curating the historical performance artwork of Ivor Davies at National Museum Cardiff. The importance and relevance of doing so would be to demonstrate application and impact of the research, while also developing a model of practice that could contribute toward the development of curatorial practice in the field. That practice is increasingly concerned with the growing acquisition of historical performance art of the 1960s into collections and exhibitions in museums.

## **5.2. Response and Reflection on Question One: Curating Ivor Davies at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Cardiff**

The first question of my research was ‘How should Ivor Davies’ historical multimedia performance artworks be curated in the exhibition Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art at National Museum Cardiff (2015–16)?’ (see 1.2).

My two key findings in response to this question are:

- That Davies’ historical multimedia performance artworks ought to be curated as central to understanding his broader practice and according to the principles of changeability, which acknowledge the importance of the work as conceived for its present moment in the contemporary exhibition as much as its initial historical unfolding.
- That Davies’ practice as networker and organiser of DIAS should also be foregrounded in the exhibition as an archival installation to enable engagement with the international artistic and cultural context through which his performance artwork gained significance at the time and can be articulated at present.

Ivor Davies’s work encompasses object-oriented painting, drawing, collage, and sculpture, but also crucially included a period in the 1960s that was dedicated to performances, actions, and demonstrations. Much of this work engages materially and metaphorically with destruction or decay as an agent of transformation. Through the research period, and the contextual review (Chapter 2), I developed my critical understanding of performance as a material practice notwithstanding its ephemerality. I have shown that



equating performance's ephemerality with immateriality can result in exhibiting the work through object remains from both the 'original' performance or subsequent re-performances, and/or according to the materiality of its archival medium such as photography, film, or video documentation of the event. An example of the former is the two different ways in which Ralph Ortiz's 1966 *Piano Destruction Concert* was curated in *Art Under Attack* (Tate Britain, 2014), on the one hand, and *Out of Actions* (MOCA, Los Angeles, 1998) and *Damage Control* (The Hirshhorn Museum, 2014) on the other. As I discussed in Chapter 4, at Tate Britain a rediscovered 'original' fragment was exhibited to represent the work, whereas in the other two exhibitions the remnants from the artist's re-performance of the destruction of a new piano were exhibited. Despite the differences in these curatorial approaches, both the exhibition of the 'original' and the re-produced destroyed piano as art object reiterate a causal relationship between an event or its re-performance (where the re-performance again reinforces the primacy of the original event in any case) and the exhibition of its material residue. Where neither of these approaches is taken, exhibitions might typically rely upon any archival materiality of the work's documentation. This most often involves the exhibition of photographic or film documentation that – similarly to the exhibition of object-remains – fundamentally alters the relationship that the spectator has with the work. An example in the thesis is my analysis of previous exhibitions of Davies's work (see 4.1.1.3). Having established material destruction and decay as the underpinning concern throughout Davies's work and the primacy of performance in articulating this concern in the context of multimedia events in the 1960s meant that we needed to find a mode of presentation that is more 'faithful' to the works' identity. The process of 'remediation', which emerged from the field of new media conservation (introduced in Chapter 2.3) and which I applied to my curatorial practice, became the most viable approach. It informed the process of exhibiting *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* and led to its final exhibition (outlined in 4.3.2.3).

As became apparent through the cataloguing process of the Ivor Davies DiA Archive (see 4.2.1.2), at the heart of Davies's practice in the 1960s was not only the making of artworks, but networking internationally. The significance and relevance of his performances between 1966 and 1968 was influenced and informed by his involvement in international events and brought to the attention of the art world at the time through his activist role as DIAS organiser. Whilst an awareness of Davies's contribution faded in later publications and exhibitions of DIAS, the extensive archival collection of documents and correspondence that is held in the artist's Penarth studio demonstrates Davies's international relevance to the post-avant-garde as a Welsh artist. Part of the rationale of the 2015 exhibition project was to demonstrate this relevance by showing the Ivor Davies DiA Archive at the centre of the exhibition in totality, with every single item identified and catalogued (as outlined in 4.2.1.2). The presentation of the DiA Archive as installed in Gallery 22 (4.3.2.1) positioned Davies as an artist-archivist and the archive as a monument to his personal experience of a significant historical event (DIAS). Davies's relationship to his archive of destruction in art is deeply personal, keeping documents of only personal value to him alongside historically significant, 'iconic' documents. This makes his archive different to those developed and organised by institutions. I have emphasised difference in this thesis through the distinction between 'organic' and 'artificial' collections (4.2.1.2.). The presentation of the Ivor Davies DiA Archive visually emphasised the personal nature of the collection and presented it as complementary or compensatory to the typical 'archival' – i.e. contextual – manner through which the history of DIAS has been displayed and narrated in previous exhibitions (e.g. *This Was Tomorrow*, 2004, or *Art Under Attack*, 2014, both in Tate Britain, see 4.1.1.3.).

### **5.3. Response and Reflection on Question Two: Implications for Museological Practice of Curating Historical Performance Art**

The second question of my research was ‘What are the broader implications for museological practice and an increasing desire to engage with the collection, preservation and presentation of historic performance art as cultural heritage?’ (outlined in 1.2) In response to this I had three key findings:

- That developments in new media conservation (such as the Variable Media Initiative) and the contemporary concepts of ‘variability’ and ‘changeability’ could be understood and applied more widely across Museums to assist exhibitions of historical performance art.
- That the main challenge for museums is undertaking research to identify or scope the intangible, performative aspect of the work considering as much the historical experience of the spectator as much as the intention of the artist which through memory can be faulty.
- That exhibiting historical performance art according to its material identity can be resource intensive and thus unfavourable by museums, given the potential outcome as a temporary installation and the preference to commission additional specific research as well as other programmes and events.

Ideas of variability and changeability are increasingly discussed in the field of new media conservation and curation, as I have discussed under 2.3. I have engaged with this discourse throughout my research in practice, and also through collaboration with conservators and consequent conference participation in Copenhagen and Los Angeles (see Chapter 5). These conferences demonstrated that the question of how we can present and

preserve time-based media in museums is very timely and debated in both fields of conservation and curation. However, the disciplinary settings of these conferences also evidenced that there are relatively few examples of case studies that cross these fields and analyse collaboration between curators and conservators in maintaining historical performance art in museums. Through developing *Silent Explosion*, and particularly through the remediation of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, I became aware of the importance of curator-conservator collaboration, which I emphasised also in the *Exhibition Matters* events series (see 4.3.4.).

Another key finding from the research in response to question two is the problem with time and resources. Museum curators are often involved in many different projects simultaneously without being able to spend three years (such as I did) researching the material identity of individual performances in preparation for an exhibition. This leads to the repeated use of the same archival material and 'one fit for all' approaches to presentation that narrate performance 'practice as a whole'.<sup>409</sup> Such approaches to the presentation of performance art can lead to narrow narratives and prevent spectators from engaging with individual artworks and their material characteristics. My research demonstrated this through the analysis of the exhibition histories of DIAS, which is regularly narrated through the same few archival documents and the same few artworks, as well as the exhibition histories of Davies's performances, where, for example, *Anatomic Explosion* (a sculptural demonstration) or *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (an experimental theatre event) were presented repeatedly in very similar ways through projected image and framed documents; to a point where it is even difficult for the artist to distinguish between individual works (see discussion in 4.1.1.3.).

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<sup>409</sup> Theresa Calonje, "In conversation with Tania Bruguera," in Theresa Calonje ed. *Live Forever. Collecting Live Art* (London: Koenig Books, 2014), 43.

To avoid generalisation in exhibitions it is important that, as performance artist Tania Bruguera argues,

[t]he archiving of performance should be done as an individualised methodology: there should be as many different ways of archiving performance as there are types of performances. Each piece that is going to be archived needs to be analysed, if possible with the artist, so the most important elements of the piece, the ones that detonate its force, are understood, and then it will be clear which elements can be preserved or reactivated.<sup>410</sup>

The Collaborative Doctoral Award was essential in providing the time and resources through which the identity of Davies's performances could be researched in detail in preparation for the exhibition, which led to a very different way of presenting these works than had been done before. This was particularly the case in relation to the artist commission and the temporary multimedia archival environment that remediated Davies's 1968 multimedia event *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*. (see 4.3.2.3.) The process involved over a year of preparatory research in the archive, and over six months' collaboration with Davies, technicians, conservators, and other artists. This remediation could be considered successful in that it – aligning with Bruguera's argument – archived and presented this historical work's individual material identity adapted to the context of a gallery, which created a possibility of collection. However, the remediation also created a problem with for the work's collection, primarily to do with the fact that it problematised the idea of singular authorship in both the 1968 event and in its 2015 version. In 2015, I proposed the remediation of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* to Davies and the Museum to engage in a discussion of how this particularly significant artwork (especially in terms of the history of Welsh performance art) could be presented. While the remediation followed Davies' original instructions, I argued that *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968/2015 should be interpreted in the exhibition as resulting from a co-production. This was important from the perspective of my research to encourage thinking about exhibiting historical performance art as always, and necessarily, a co-production (in 2015 this included

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<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

the artist, curators, conservators and technicians, and the spectator, whose interaction with the environment completed the work). In the co-produced environment, we clearly identified Davies as the author of the work and the 2015 version as its co-produced instance. As such, the work was presented similarly to how instruction-based pieces survive in the field of music or theatre, but differently to how performance art usually survives in the Museum. This mode of presentation encouraged thinking about the collaborative process of exhibition-practice in general, which in the case of re-presenting historical performance art also means the production of the artwork. The artist was open to such interpretation in the exhibition context, however, his perception seemingly changed in the publication, in which he credited the multimedia archival environment to me,<sup>411</sup> thus disassociating his authorship from this version of the work.

The problem that is apparent from the process of remediation is that the collaborative production of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968/2015 created an overlap between curatorial and artistic processes that might bring up the question of authorship and whether, as art critic Boris Groys argues, in contemporary art 'a distinction between (curated) exhibition and (artistic) installation is (...) essentially obsolete'<sup>412</sup> Added to this the question of authorship was further complicated through the commission for re-performance, when Mike Pearson's new performance (for which he was credited for) could be considered as an iteration of the

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<sup>411</sup> "A notable element in the exhibition is Judit Bodor's reinstallation of aspects of one of my experimental theatre pieces, *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (1968)." See Davies, Roms, Thornton, "Foreword," 10.

<sup>412</sup> Boris Groys, "Multiple Authorship," in *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Exhibitions and Biennials*, eds. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 2006), 93-99. Republished in *IDEA* 26 (2007):n.p., <http://idea.ro/revista/?q=en/node/41&articol=469> (accessed 20 January 2016).

1968 *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (see 4.3.3.). Given the loss of the work's 'original' materiality and authorial context, neither of these reinterpretations might provide a resolution for Davies for how his historical performance might continue in the future authentically in collections, as it was apparent from his post-exhibition email.<sup>413</sup>

However, from the research's perspective the exhibition was a success, as it certainly provided a case study for exploring how such artworks could live on in the Museum, but differently from their historical conception. The remediated and re-performed versions of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* added to the understanding of this historical event as a multimedia work that relies on a very specific intangible archive (sound, light, projection, and interaction), which cannot be understood from the remaining documentation alone (film and documents). The remediated and re-performed versions were also as mutable, partial, subject to change and difficult to define as the historical event had been; all three were alternating between the ideal of the artwork as conceived by the artist on the 1968 cue-sheet and its realisation as encountered by spectators then, now, and in the future. While the material archive remains in the artist's possession, the remediated environment and the re-performance, just as the event in 1968, are now part of the artwork's trace history and thus its extended materiality.

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<sup>413</sup> In response to my email on a post-exhibition discussion and evaluation Davies refused an interview based on him being critical of my methods. Ivor Davies, email to the author, 25 April 2016. This was unfortunate given that the whole point of the conversation was to critically evaluate the research together.

## 5.4. Reflection on Methodology

In designing the methodology in response to the research questions, I imagined to first answer question one (how to exhibit Davies' performance at AC-NMW) to see if I could develop a model of practice that would could inform other curators working in a similar context, and thus question two (what are the broader implications for museum practice) would be resolved. However, I couldn't predict where the research would go until I started it, as my work was practice-led and, as such, responsive to being situated within the museum and Davies' archive and then generating strategies for the exhibition making in response to both contexts. Developing methodology out of challenges I faced in my practice meant that my research path led me to findings that I couldn't have predicted at the beginning This was particularly the case with the principles of variability and changeability, which I came across while crossing disciplines and engaging with new media conservation and that eventually became important in further developing my practice.

The methodology I applied responded also to my position as co-curator of the exhibition. This position was only secured after the first year of research and after discussing other options for my contribution to the exhibition, including 'shadow curating', an idea developed as part of the doctoral research of Nuno Sacramento.<sup>414</sup> While shadow curating would have allowed me to develop a methodology that would have critically evaluated Nicholas Thornton's work as the curator of the exhibition, becoming a co-curator allowed developing a methodology that creatively and critically contributed to the curatorial process as part of a collaborative team. While this permitted a more direct engagement with the

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<sup>414</sup> Nuno Sacramento, *Shadow Curating: a critical portfolio*, Diss., University of Dundee, 2006. [http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/shadow-curating\(932929b8-ec03-4d73-8851-855281f17aff\).html](http://discovery.dundee.ac.uk/portal/en/theses/shadow-curating(932929b8-ec03-4d73-8851-855281f17aff).html) (accessed 14 November 2013).



exhibition process, being part of a collaborative team necessarily shaped my research. This sometimes led to not being able to do what I had planned to accommodate the agenda of the artist or the Museum curator. This, for example, led to the difference between the final layout and content of the exhibition and the plans I outlined in my narrative exhibition design based on my research findings (4.3.1.).

There were also elements of the research that arose in the process that changed my initial understanding of the complexity of the research questions. For example, while initially I thought the main issue of exhibiting performance art is the ephemerality of the artwork, I now understand that what is exhibited (and how) is largely influenced by the problem of how to prolong the artist's singular authorship without the artist being there. I used the *Exhibition Matters* series to further investigate the implications of performance art in museum practice through questions that had been raised by our exhibition. To gauge broader implications (and so to engage further with question two) would have meant undertaking further interviews or organising the discussion events with a much wider range of museum professionals than the ones I was collaborating with in the local context of the museum in Cardiff. While this element of my methodology can perhaps be perceived as narrow, it was developed as such to engage with another aspiration of the CDA award, which was to provide National Museum Cardiff with a case study that could be used for developing the museum's future policy toward the acquisition and maintenance of time-based artworks according to their material identity. Engaging in conversations with curator Nicholas Thornton and conservators Emily O'Reilly and Rose Miller allowed a moment of public reflection on museum practice that is beneficial for the practitioners and engages the spectators in processes of exhibition-making that otherwise remain hidden.

## 5.5. Contribution to Knowledge

My research into Davies's DiA archive contributes significantly to the understanding of the artist's 1960s performance work and sheds new light upon the formal diversity of performance practice in the UK in the late 1960s. It produced an archival catalogue of over 400 documents (see Appendix 1.), oral history interviews with Ivor Davies and John Plant; artist interviews with Gustav Metzger and Pedro Lagoa (Appendix 3.), three exhibition case studies, the production of an artist commission for re-performance, and three discursive events as part of *Exhibition Matters*. All these materials are either attached as Appendix to the thesis or available online at [www.juditbodor.info/PhD](http://www.juditbodor.info/PhD) and on electronic media (USB Drive), and can be used in the future to further research into Davies's performances, the history of DIAS, and performative exhibitions as curatorial practice. These research outcomes also contribute significantly to the acknowledgement of Davies' practice as a significant example of late twentieth century destruction art and to the positioning of the artist as an important contributor to the network around DIAS.

Secondly, my research into 'remediation' as a curatorial strategy provides an alternative to reconstruction, re-enactment and other reiterative strategies that are widespread in current curatorial practice in museums for exhibiting historical performance art as live art. While remediation is proposed as an appropriate approach to presenting the material identity of the specific experimental and multimedia theatre event that was *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, the research also recognises that this approach might not have been applicable to Davies's

many other performances, such as his sculptural demonstrations with explosives. It is through this recognition that the research also contributes to the discourse around exhibiting historical performance art, arguing for the need to create resources for developing individual curatorial strategies for the presentation and preservation of such artworks. The documentation of the remediation is attached to the thesis as Appendix 4.

Positioning the research in a wider interdisciplinary field of practice is the third significant contribution to knowledge. The research has been disseminated in an essay in the publication accompanying the exhibition *Silent Explosion*<sup>415</sup>, as conference presentation at the *Curatorial Challenges* conference (Copenhagen, 2016)<sup>416</sup> and as a peer-reviewed paper, co-authored with AC – NMW conservators Emily O'Reilly and Rose Miller. This paper was presented at the *Saving the Now: Crossing Boundaries to Conserve Contemporary Artworks* conference in Los Angeles (2016)<sup>417</sup> and published in *Studies in Conservation* (see Appendix 6). Finally, the research generated a book review of the publication *Revisions: Zen for Film* by Hanna. B. Hölling, in *Journal of Curatorial Studies*<sup>418</sup>. A significant acknowledgement of the importance of this research in the field of art history is Kristine Stiles' inclusion of the research in her forthcoming annotated bibliography on 'Destruction in Art', in DaCosta Kaufmann, T. ed. *Oxford Bibliographies in Art History*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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<sup>415</sup> Judit Bodor, "Silent Explosion: The Making of an Exhibition," in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, ed. by Heike Roms, (London: Occasional Papers, 2015), 124-146,

<sup>416</sup> *Curatorial Challenges*. (Conference, University of Copenhagen), May 25-27, 2016.

<sup>417</sup> *Saving the Now: Crossing Boundaries to Conserve Contemporary Artworks*. (Annual Congress of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (IIC), Los Angeles), September 12-16, 2016. And Emily O'Reilly, Rose Miller and Judit Bodor, "Curation, Conservation and The Artist in Silent Explosion, Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art", *Studies in Conservation*, 61, sup 2 (2016): 167-173.

<sup>418</sup> Judit Bodor, "Revisions: Zen for Film", *Journal of Curatorial Studies* 5, no.1. (2016): 149-157.

## 5.6. Suggested Further Research

That the research is timely and relevant to the emerging discourse around the preservation and presentation of time-based media art in the Museum is evidenced by the opportunities that have already arisen to enable further research. These include an invitation to speak in a panel on authenticity in performance art as part of the Research Conference: Collecting Performance at the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, September 30, 2017. This invitation emerged from an ongoing conversation with the museum's curator about their developing strategies around collecting performance art. Another possible avenue for future research might arise from my participation in interdisciplinary research through an 8000-word article submitted to the forthcoming peer-reviewed volume *The Explicit Material: Material and Object Inquiries on the Intersection of Academic, Curatorial and Conservation Cultures*. The volume will be published within Brill's *Studies in Art & Materiality* (series editor: Ann-Sophie Lehmann).

Apart from the opportunities that these invitations provide for future research, the issue that this current research project has raised, and that I would consider a possibility for further exploration, is the provenance of multiple authorship in the Museum. This concerns how the work of conservators, curators and technicians could be credited in re-productions of performance art in a way that does not undermine but enriches the artist's authorship and makes it apparent for the viewer that what they experience is a result of co-production. A possible way to research this would be through the analysis of the work of curators, conservators and technicians as creative practitioners and co-producers in the exhibitions of artworks that have been already collected.

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*Art and the 60s: This Was Tomorrow,* London: Tate Britain. 30 June – 16 September 2004. Curated by Chris Stephens and Katharine Stout.

*Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm.* London: Tate Britain, 2 October 2013 – 5 January 2014. Curated by Tabitha Barber, Dr Stacy Boldrick, Dr Ruth Kenny and Sofia Karamani.

*A Short History of Performance Art. Part One to Four.* London, Whitechapel Gallery. 2002-2006. Curated by Iwona Blazwick, and Andrea Tarsia.

*Barbara Hepworth. Sculpture for a Modern World.* London: Tate Britain, 24 June – 25 October 2015. Curated by Chris Stephens.

*Blast to Freeze: British Art in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* in 2002/2003. Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg and Les Abattoirs, Toulouse. 2002 – 2003. Curated by Gijs van Tuyl and Henry Meyric Hughes.

*Damage Control: Art and Destruction since 1950,* Washington: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution in association with Mudam Luxembourg and Universalmuseum Joanneum/Kunsthhaus Graz. 2014 – 2015. Curated by Kerry Brougher and Russell Ferguson.

*Exploding Utopia.* London: Laure Genillard Gallery. 28 September - 21 December 2013. Curated by Rozemin Keshvani

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*Institution 2,* Helsinki: Kiasma. 3 December 2003 – 5 January 2004. Curated by Jens Hoffman.

*International Installation Festival.* Budapest: Artpool P60. 17 March – 4 April 1998. Curated by György Galántai.

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*Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form (Works – Concepts – Processes).* Bern: Kunsthalle. March 22 – April 27, 1969. Curated by Harald Szeemann.

*Marina Abramović. Seven Easy Pieces.* New York, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 9–15 November 2005. Curated by Nancy Spector, Jennifer Blessing.

*Marina Abramović. The Artist is Present.* New York, Museum of Modern Art. 14 – 31 March

2010. Curated by Klaus Biesenbach.

*Moments. The History of Performance in 10 Acts.* Karlsruhe. Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie. 8 March 2012 – 29 April 2013. Curated by Boris Charmatz, Sigrid Gareis, Georg Schöllhammer.

*Ni allaf ddianc rhag hon (I Cannot Escape This Place.* AC-NMW. National Museum Cardiff. July 2011 – January 2012. Curated by Nicholas Thornton.

*NOTES on a Return,* Newcastle: Laing Gallery. 9 May – 5 September 2009. Curated by Sophia Hao.

*Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979.* Los Angeles. Museum of Contemporary Art. 8 February – 10 May 1998. Curated by Paul Schimmel.

*Revisions – Zen for Film.* New York: Focus Gallery, Bard Graduate Centre. 18 September 2015 – 21 February 2016. Curated by Hanna B Hölling.

*Re-Act Feminism* - performance art of the 1960s and 70s today. Berlin: Akademie der Künste. 13 December 2008 – 8 February 2009. Curated by Bettina Knap and Beatrice Ellen Stammer.

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*Telling History: An Archive and Three Case Studies* (11 October – 23 November 2003, Kunstverein München, curated by Mara Lind, Søren Grammel and Katharina Schlieben)

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*100 Years: A History of Performance Art.* New York: Museum of Modern Art. Jun 19 – September 17, 2010. Curated by RoseLee Goldberg, and Klaus Biesenbach.

*12x1: une certaine actualité de l'art contemporain en France.* Europalia, France in association with Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts. 1975. Curated by Karel J. Geirlandt.

## Appendices

1. Judit Bodor, 'Ivor Davies Destruction in Art (DIA) Archive.' [Pre-print Pdf version] Published in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, ed. Heike Roms (Occasional Papers, 2015)
  2. Judit Bodor, Exhibition design for *Silent Explosion* with list of works and notes for display, 2015.
  3. Judit Bodor, Conversation with Pedro Lagoa. [Edited transcription of artist interview on May 20, 2014]
  4. Judit Bodor, Notes for remediating *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*, September 2015.
  5. Emily O'Reilly, Rose Miller and Judit Bodor, "Curation, Conservation and the Artist in Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art", [Manuscript draft for publication in *Journal of Conservation*, Vol.61 sup.2. (2016) 127-132.
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## Appendix I

Judit Bodor, 'Ivor Davies Destruction in Art (DIA) Archive.' [Pre-print Pdf version]  
Published in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*, ed. Heike Roms  
(Occasional Papers, 2015)

# **IVOR DAVIES DESTRUCTION IN ART (DIA) ARCHIVE**

Catalogued and annotated by Judit Bodor



Slides collected by Ivor Davies for his lectures and presentations on art and destruction

The *Ivor Davies DiA Archive* was catalogued and annotated between 2013 and 2015 in consultation with the artist. It comprises hundreds of documents collected by Davies relating to his performance practice between 1966 and 1968 and to the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS), 1966, of which he was co-organizer and participant. Many documents in the Archive have not previously been publicly available. The following annotations offer a summary of the content of the archival boxes created, followed by a complete listing of its holdings.

### Criteria Used in Establishing the Ivor Davies DIA Archive

- It includes archival documents, extant ephemera and material remains relating to Ivor Davies' performances between 1966–68 and the *Destruction in Art Symposium*, September 1966, London.
- It encompasses personal correspondence, art ephemera, manuscripts, press cuttings, objects, magazines, posters, flyers, notes, drawings, event scores, lists, stationery dating from the period (1966–68) and material collected by the artist in retrospect about DIAS participants or Destruction in Art (DiA) in general.
- It also includes documents generated during the cataloguing research process, such as oral history interviews with the artist, interviews with Gustav Metzger and with John Plant (organizer of the 1968 Swansea University Arts Festival) and documents relating to relevant exhibitions. It encompasses both original and photocopied material collected by the artist.
- Some material of little interpretative value is included to illustrate Davies' professional relationships and activities at the time (e.g. contact details, notes, stationery)
- Some material is unidentified miscellany dating from 1966; according to the artist's recollection it was collected from DIAS-related events.
- Some material has been identified and dated as part of the cataloguing process.
- Although Ivor Davies is the collector and custodian of the Archive, authors of letters, manuscripts and photographs maintain their copyright over content.
- This archival inventory is accurate as of May 2015. As the Archive remains open, the artist may in the future add, remove or reorder its content.
- The Archive is private and can only be accessed by permission from the artist and other copyright owners.

### Context and Other Source

DIAS is now regarded as one of the most significant artists' meetings of the twentieth century. Archival material related to DIAS has featured in important publications and exhibitions since the late 1990s. Amongst the key historical

overviews are Kristine Stiles' doctoral dissertation 'The Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS): The Radical Cultural Project of Event-Structured Live Art' (University of California Berkeley, 1987); and consequent publications by Stiles including: 'Synopsis of the Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) and Its Theoretical Significance', *The Act 1*, Spring 1987, 22-31; and more recently 'The Story of DIAS and the 'DIAS Affect'', in *Gustav Metzger History History*, ed. Sabine Breitwieser (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2005), 41-65. Other authors who have written extensively on Destruction in Art, DIAS and Gustav Metzger include Ross Birrell, Kerry Brougher, Justin Hoffmann, Stewart Home and Andrew Wilson. Survey exhibitions of twentieth century art that presented DIAS-related material have included *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-79*, The Museum of Contemporary Art at The Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles (8 February – 10 May 1998); *Art & The 60s: This Was Tomorrow*, Tate Britain, London (30 June – 26 September 2004), *Art Under Attack: Histories of British Iconoclasm*, Tate Britain (2 October 2013 – 5 January 2014) and *Damage Control: Art and Destruction Since 1950*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (24 October 2013 – 6 May 2014). Other useful sources of information on DIAS are artists' oral history interviews collected in the *National Life Stories: Artist Lives* collection in the British Library Sound Archive and the American Art Archives. Many participants' contributions to DIAS can be found in solo exhibition catalogues and biographies as curators and historians historicise their practice. A recent example is Stephen Willats' paper delivered at DIAS, entitled 'The Mechanistic Crisis' – the paper was mentioned in relation to the artist's solo exhibition *Control. Stephen Willats' Work 1962-69*, Raven Row, London (23 January – 30 March 2014). Some of the DIAS participants, such as John Sharkey and Barry Miles, wrote up their own memories of the events: John Sharkey, 'Creative Destroyer to Artists Meeting Place or Art Meeting Place to AMP', *The Centre of Attention* [www.thecentreofattention.org/dgamp.html](http://www.thecentreofattention.org/dgamp.html); Barry Miles, *London Calling: A Countercultural History of London Since 1945*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2011).

Ivor Davies' performance work has as yet been rarely written about in scholarly publications (exceptions are Stiles 1987 and Roms 2008). Documentation from the archive has been included in the recent exhibitions, *Ni allaf ddianc rhag hon – I Cannot Escape This Place*, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, Cardiff (9 July 2011 – January 2012) and *Exploding Utopia*, Laure Genillard Gallery, London (28 September – 21 December 2013). Interviews with Davies about his performance work have been conducted by Kristine Stiles, 'Ivor Davies in Discussion with Kristine Stiles', *Link 52*, 1987, 4-10; Heike Roms, 'Origins: Ivor Davies', *What's Welsh for Performance?* (Cardiff: trace Samizdat Press, 2008), 17-40; and Rhodri Davies, 'I aspire to a desert- island art – Interview with Ivor Davies', *Planet* 212, Winter, 2013-14, 102.

Please note that some of Ivor Davies' performance events have changed titles over the years. We are using here the artist's preferred titles.



## Arrangement of documents in the Archive

### BOX 1

#### Ravensbourne Symposium

Documents relating to the *Destruction Creation & Chemical Change* Symposium at Ravensbourne College of Art on 23 May 1966, organised by Peter Holliday (a former student of Ivor Davies' at Edinburgh University and Lecturer at Ravensbourne College of Art), with support from Ivor Davies and Gustav Metzger (b.1926), artist and activist who developed the concept of Auto-Destructive and Auto-Creative Art. The Ravensbourne Symposium is referred to by Ivor Davies as '*Destruction Creation Movement | Movement Destruction Creation | Creation Movement Destruction*', based on a poster he made and used to advertise the event in the College. The symposium also included contributions from artist Mark Boyle (1934-2005) and Dom Sylvester Houédard (aka dsh) (1924-1992), a Benedictine monk, scholar, translator and concrete poet.

- Peter Holliday's CV, no date.
- Peter Holliday's letter in support of Ivor Davies' application for the Chair of Fine Art at Edinburgh University, no date.
- Peter Holliday's reference letter in support of Ivor Davies' job application, 10 June 1974.
- Letter from Peter Holliday to Ivor Davies, 1966.
- Dom Sylvester Houédard (dsh): 'Aesthetics of The Death Wish?'. Handwritten cover letter and typed manuscript for an article in *Art & Artist*, 1966.
- Letter from Gustav Metzger to Ivor Davies, 1966.
- Ivor Davies' notes for Dom Sylvester Houédard's article, 1966.
- Ivor Davies' poster design for the symposium, 1966. Photocopied collage.
- A box of slides used for Ivor Davies' presentations in Ravensbourne and consequently in DIAS.

#### Detonation Demonstration

Correspondence and press cutting relating to Davies' first destruction art event at the Women's Union, Edinburgh University, Chambers Street, on 24 August 1966. The title of the event was identified retrospectively from an entry found in Davies' 1966 notebook. Peter Wheeler was a student of Davies' at Edinburgh University at the time; he can be seen on photographs of Davies' *Anatomic Explosions*. George Foulkes was the President of the Scottish Union of Students and Caroline A. Strathie was the Assistant Warden at the Women's Union, Edinburgh University, in 1966. The *Student* is a weekly newspaper produced by students at the University of Edinburgh.

- Peter J. H. Wheeler's manuscript for an article in *Student*, 23 October 1966.
- Peter J.H. Wheeler: 'A Destructive Letter', *Student*, 27 October 1966. Press cutting.
- Letter from George Foulkes to Ivor Davies, 6 September 1966
- Letter from Caroline A. Strathie to Ivor Davies, 20 October 1966

#### Prelude to Anatomic Explosions

Documents relating to Davies' first event using explosives as part of DIAS, at the Territorial Army Drill Hall, Forrest Road, Edinburgh, 1 September 1966, 5.45 pm. It followed a DIAS press announcement held at the Richard Demarco Gallery, 8 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh. A photograph taken sometime in 1966 showing Davies in his studio with an anatomic model has been kept also in this group although not relating directly to the performance event. The letter by Patrick Elliott (Research Assistant at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art) refers to an exhibition in 1989.

- Davies' list of materials used in the event.
- Ivor Davies in his studio (Edinburgh) with anatomic model. 2 B&W photographs with negatives (no date, photographer unknown)
- J.K.: 'New Art Form or Juvenile Bathos?', *The Glasgow Herald*, 2 September 1966, p.7. Press cutting.
- John Lloyd: 'Varsity Notes', *Edinburgh Weekly*, 21 October 1966; Cornelia Oliver: 'Auto-destruction', *The Guardian*, 3 September 1966. Two press cuttings mounted on one sheet.
- Express Staff Reporter: 'Art that Goes Out with a Real Bang', *Scottish Daily Express*, 2 September 1966. Press cutting.
- Photo with caption, *Evening News and Dispatch*, 2 September 1966, p.12; letter to the editor by Peter J.H. Wheeler, *Evening News and Dispatch*, 16 November 1966. Two press cuttings mounted on one sheet.
- Kel Hunter: 'Davies and Wheeler. Blown Sky-High', *Student*, 3 November 1966. Press cutting.
- Letter from Richard Demarco to The Secretary of the Territorial Army Forces Association, 1966.
- Agreement form for a three-minute interview with Ivor Davies for *Today*, BBC Scotland on 8 September 1966 at the Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh.
- Letter from Patrick Elliott to Ivor Davies, 9 October 1989.
- Photocopies of photographs, 15 sheets.
- Seven photographs, *Beaverbrook Newspapers*, Edinburgh.
- Four photographs, *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh.
- Four photographs, unidentified source, one with Davies' annotations.
- *Exploding Utopia*, Laure Gennillard Gallery, London (28 September – 21 December 2013,

Curator: Rozemin Keshvani). Exhibition catalogue and list of exhibited works.

- 'Roundabout', *Student*, 13 October 1966. Press cutting.

#### DIAS Publications

Material published under the collective authorship of the DIAS Honorary Committee, which was set up in June 1966. Gustav Metzger created most of these publications with help from active Committee members. Davies promoted the DIAS events in Scotland, organised a press announcement in the Richard Demarco Gallery, Edinburgh, contributed to programme planning and policy development for DIAS and chaired panels at the Symposium held in the Africa Centre in London. The poet John Sharkey (1936-2014) was Gallery Manager at the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts), 17-18 Dover Street, London, who helped with organization in London, designed the DIAS poster and the newsletters and other publications. Bob Cobbing (1920-2002) was a British performance poet, publisher and the manager of Better Books, 94 Charing Cross Road, London), which was one of the venues that DIAS used for events. Mario Amaya (1933-1986) was an American art critic, museum director and the founder editor of *Art & Artists Magazine* (1966-69), who had lived in London in 1964, advocated DIAS internationally and published a special issue on 'Auto-Destruction' for *Art & Artist* (August 1966), which was conceived separately from DIAS but promoted the event and included contributions from artists involved.

- *Press Release*, 27 April 1966.
- *Press Release*, May 1966.
- *Press Release*, June 1966.
- *Press Release*, September 1966.
- Press Conference announcement, 15 June 1966.
- *Call for artists, writers, psychologists, sociologists and others*, no date.
- DIAS leaflet, no date.
- *Press Release*, 30 September 1966.
- *Film programme for Saturday and Sunday nights*, no date. .
- Flyer with list of participants and details of symposium and exhibition, no date.
- Final symposium programme, no date.
- Programme for 30 September 1966, 8 pm.
- *Two evenings with Yoko Ono*, Flyer for 28 and 29 September 1966, 7.45 pm, Africa Center.
- *DIAS Policy Statement* (draft), April 1967.
- *DIAS Policy Statement*. Copy No.7. Signed by Gustav Metzger, John Sharkey and Ivor Davies, 18 April 1967.
- *DIAS Preliminary Report*, February 1967.
- *DIAS INFORMATION 1*, March 1967. Photocopied newsletter.
- *DIAS INFORMATION 2*, June 1967. Photocopied newsletter.

- *DIAS INFORMATION 3*, August 1967. Photocopied newsletter.
- *DIAS INFORMATION 4*, September 1967. Photocopied newsletter.
- Symposium planning form with notes by Gustav Metzger, no date.
- DIAS poster designed by John Sharkey and signed by Otto Mühl, Juan Hidalgo, Wolf Vostell, Ivor Davies, Al Hansen, Hermann Nitsch, Peter Weibel, Yoko Ono. One signature is unclear.
- *Two Evenings with Yoko Ono*, poster.
- John Latham's poster for *Skoob Tower* event.

### BOX 2

#### DIAS Press

Contemporary critical reflections on DIAS, including all articles assembled by Davies about the symposium and some of its participants. This section of the archive has been continuously developed by Davies over the years. Jasia Reichardt (b.1933) was Assistant Director of the ICA, London, between 1963-71. Edward Lucie Smith (b.1933) is a poet, writer, curator and art critic. *Link* was the magazine of the Association of Artists and Designers in Wales, for which Davies was an editor in the 1980s. Jay Landesman (1919-2011) was a writer and publisher from St Louis, who moved to London in 1964 and became part of the countercultural scene. *The East Village Other* (1965-1972) was a bi-weekly countercultural newspaper published in New York City. Arthur Moysé (1914-2003) published the anarchist newspaper *Freedom*, for which he was art critic and cartoonist from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. Al Hansen (1927-1997) was an American Fluxus artist and DIAS participant, who also wrote the book *A Primer of Happenings & Time | Space Art*, published by Something Else Press in New York in 1965. Anthony (Tony) Cox (b.1936) is an American filmmaker, who came to DIAS with his then wife, Yoko Ono. Cox also published an article about Ono in the August issue of *Art & Artist*, 1966, pp. 16-20. *The Act! Journal of Performance Art, Activities, Happenings, Events and Choices* was published in New York between 1986-1991. *LIFE* was a magazine printed between 1936 and 2002. *Studio International* was an international contemporary art magazine published in London six times a year between 1964-1992.

- 'Beautiful Jean-Jacques', *Time*, 23 September 1966, 31. Full magazine.
- Printer's proof for an advert in *Student* about DIAS.
- Jasia Reichardt: 'Destruction in Art', *Architectural Review*, December 1966, 1-4. Photocopy.
- Edward Lucie Smith: 'Perplexities of an art critic', *The Times*, 13 September 1966, 13. Press cutting.

- *Link 52*. Special issue on DIAS, ed. Ivor Davies, 1986, 1-24. Full magazine.
- Roger Barnard: 'DIAS: Playing with Fire', *Peace News*, 7 October 1966. Press cutting.
- Jay Landesman: 'Creating Destruction as an Art Form', *St Louis Post Dispatch*, 6 October 1966. Press cutting.
- 'The Living Theatre', *The East Village Other*, 1-15 October 1966. Thermo copy.
- Arthur Moysse: 'Manifesto of the Dead', *Freedom. For Workers' Control*, Vol. 27, No 29, 17 September 1966.
- Al Hansen: 'London: Destruction in Art Symposium', *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 44, No.1, November 1966, 53-54. Photocopies, no original.
- 'Preview of destruction'. Unidentified source.
- Jay Landesman & Tony Cox: 'Two Views of DIAS', *International Times No.1*, 14-27 October 1966, 9.
- *New Statesman*, 9 September 1966; 'Death and Art', unidentified source; notice on DIAS, *New Statesman*, 23 September 1966, 460. Three press cuttings kept together.
- Jay Landesman: *Jaywalking*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1992, 43-45, 52. Photocopy.
- Kristine Stiles: 'Synopsis of the Destruction in Art Symposium and Its Theoretical Significance', *The Act* Vol.1. No.2., 1987, 22-31. Photocopy.
- '£100 fine after 'art happening,' (unidentified source). Photocopy.
- *Art & Artists*, August 1966. Auto Destructive Issue. Full magazine.
- *LIFE Magazine*, 17 February 1967. Including Barry Farrell: 'The Other Culture', 86-105. Full magazine.
- 'Excerpts from selected papers delivered at DIAS' (Metzger, Ortiz, Davies, Latham, Zaj and Joseph H. Berke), *Studio International*, December 1966, 282-284. Full magazine.
- *Art & Artists*, October 1966. (DIAS photos), 63-66. Full magazine.
- *London Life*, 8 October 1966. (Mario Amaya: 'Destruction in Art... What are they trying to prove?', 5-11.) Full magazine.
- Ivor Davies list of newspaper articles, no date.

## BOX 3

### DIAS Contributions

Contains various documents sent to the DIAS Committee. George Maciunas (1931-1978) was a Lithuanian-born American artist central to Fluxus, an international network of avant-garde artists interested in breaking down boundaries of artistic media and reordering the production, reception

and distribution of art. Raphael Montañez (Ralph) Ortiz (b.1934) is a Spanish-American artist mostly known for his Piano Destruction Concerts; he was also actively involved in planning DIAS USA in 1968. Bernard Aubertin (b.1934) is a French artist associated with the group ZERO, which from 1965 made performances of burning paintings, books and other objects.

- List of papers submitted to the symposium.
- George Maciunas: *U.S. Surpasses All Nazi Genocide Records!*, Sent to DIAS and read out by Beverly Rowe on 9 September, 3-5 pm panel. Photocopied pamphlet.
- Ralph Ortiz: *Destructivism. Second Manifesto*. London 1966.
- Six short texts in French from B. Aubertin. Document sent to DIAS and read out by Julien Blaine. Photocopy.
- Ivor Davies: *A Pattern of the Development of Destruction as Creation*. Typewritten with handwritten annotations.

### DIAS Correspondence

Includes all letters Davies kept in relation to the organization of DIAS 1966. Michael B. Nicholson (1934-2001) and Richard Arthure were invited to DIAS by Davies. Nicholson was Senior Research Fellow in Conflict Studies, Lancaster University, in 1966, interested in formal analysis of war and the possibility of peaceful resolutions of disputes. Also known as Kunga Dawa, Richard Arthure was the first Westerner who trained with Tibetan Buddhist master Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (1939-1987) and became a Buddhist meditation instructor. T.G. Hughes wrote a response after watching a destruction performance by Ortiz on TV. Tony Scott wrote about a new work he was making at the time.

- Letter from Michael B. Nicholson to Ivor Davies, 9 June 1966.
- Letter from Gustav Metzger to Ivor Davies, 18 August 1966.
- Letter from Gustav Metzger to Ivor Davies, 29 July 1966.
- Letter from Richard Arthure to Ivor Davies, 21 September 1966.
- Letter from T.G. Hughes' to Ralph Ortiz, 21 September 1966, Photocopy. Kept with Letter from T.G. Hughes' to Ivor Davies, 21 January 1967.
- Letter from Ivor Davies to Tony Cox, 6 October 1966 (unsent).
- Letter from Tony Scott to Ivor Davies, 17 April 1967.
- Letter from Tony Scott to Ivor Davies, 30 May 1967.

### DIAS Contacts

Addresses and telephone numbers collected between 1966-68, many of which are relating to Davies' wider networks at the time.

### DIAS Ephemera

- A receipt of chemicals delivered on 19 September 1966 to Ivor Davies. Kept together with delivery notice for final DIAS event at the Mercury Theatre, 30 September 1966.
- Event score given out by Juan Hidalgo as part of an unidentified Robin Page event at DIAS.
- Flyer against animal killing given out by protesters during DIAS.
- Bill Butler: *Self-Destroying Poem*, 1966. Artwork in unopened envelope.
- DIAS Conference Pass and headed DIAS letter paper.
- Ivor Davies' notes during DIAS.
- Ivor Davies' synopsis of his DIAS related works and letter to Peter Townsend, editor of *Studio International*, 25 October 1966. Copy of cover letter and five pages of typed text. Other copies of pages 2 and 3.

## BOX 4

### DIAS Photos

Photographic prints and a CD by photographer Tom Picton, taken of DIAS events at The Free School Playground in Notting Hill and at the Africa Centre in Covent Garden during September 1966. Including photos of artists Werner Schreib (1925-1969), a German concrete poet; Brazilian artist Pro Diaz; Henri Chopin (1922-2008), French sound poet and musician; Greek artist Simos Tsapsudis; Wolf Vostell (1932-1998), German Fluxus artist; Jean Toche (b.1932), Belgian artist and activist associated with the New York Destructive Art movement; Juan Hidalgo (b. 1927) from the Italian experimental group ZAJ; British conceptual artist John Latham (1921-2006); Jean Jacques Lebel (b.1936) French avant-garde artist, poet and publisher; Joseph H. Berke, American physiotherapist; and Yoko Ono (b.1937), Japanese multimedia artist, musician and political activist. A copy of a photo taken by Hanns Sohm (1921-1999, founder of Archiv Sohm, Stuttgart) showing Davies reading his paper at the Africa Centre, 9 September 1966 is also included here.

- Seven photographs of Werner Schreib, *Death of Lucullus*, Free School Playground, 10 September 1966.
- Eight photographs of Pro Diaz, *Painting with Explosives*, Free School Playground, London, 12 September 1966.
- People behind a brick wall, Free School

Playground, London, September 1966.

- Henri Chopin and Simos Tsapsudis, Free School Playground, London, 12 September 1966.
- Wolf Vostell, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Henri Chopin, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Three photographs of unidentified person reading a paper, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Jean Toche's destroyed typewriters, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Two photographs of Gustav Metzger, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Six photographs of Gustav Metzger, Wolf Vostell, Al Hansen, Juan Hidalgo and audience, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9 September 1966, 3-5 pm.
- John Latham, *Flying Skoob*, Free School Playground, London, 13 September 1966.
- Burning bin, Free School Playground, London, 9-11 September 1966.
- Two photographs of Robin Page, Free School Playground, London, 13 September 1966.
- Three photographs of Anthony Scott, *On Chopped Writing*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 10 September 1966, 11 am -1.30 pm
- John Latham reading *Event Structure and the English Dream*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 10 September 1966, 11 am -1.30 pm
- Henri Chopin's *Tape Presentation*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 10 September 1966, 2.30-5 pm.
- Jean Jacques Lebel *On Happenings*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9 September, 6-9 pm.
- Pro Diaz *On Art*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9 September, 6-9 pm.
- Simos Tsapsudis, DIAS, Africa Centre, London 9-11 September 1966.
- John Sharkey and Al Hansen, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 11 September 1966, afternoon.
- Dr Joseph Berke reading *Man as Self-Destroying Art*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 11 September, 10.30-1 pm.
- Bob Cobbing: *The destruction of the DIAS exhibition*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 10 September 1966, 11 am -1.30 pm.
- CD with DIAS group photos and Yoko Ono: *Shadow Piece*, 13 September 1966.
- Ivor Davies reading *A Pattern of the Development of Destruction as Creation*, DIAS, Africa Centre, London, 9 September 1966, 3-5 pm panel. Copy of photograph from Archiv Sohm.

## BOX 5

### DIAS Miscellaneous

Unidentified material dating from 1966 relating to destruction art and kept by the artist with the DIAS documents.

- AMM: *An excerpt from a continuous performance*, 15 September 1966.
- Ivor Davies' notes on some artists. Photocopy.
- Letter from the *International Times* to Ivor Davies, signed Jack (i.e. Jack Henry Moore?), 11 April 1967.
- 'Ivor Davies', unidentified source, page 492, no date. Photocopy.
- Peter Simple: 'Way of the World'. Unidentified source. Press cutting.
- Christopher and Aline Sparks: *A F.A.C.T.S. feedback format*.
- Stan Bell: 'Destruction in Art', Dissertation, Glasgow College of Art. Index card.
- Gerald Fitzgerald, Leo Austing, Martin Johnson: *London Indications*, September 15<sup>th</sup> – September 26<sup>th</sup> 1966.
- *xerox work*, no.487. Unidentified.
- *Ars Brevis*. Unidentified source. Press cutting.
- *Autolycus*. Unidentified source. Press cutting.

### Anatomic Explosions

Documents relating to Ivor Davies' event on 13 September 1966, Ladbroke Grove (close to the Free School Playground, Notting Hill), London. Includes photographs by Michael Broom and Tom Picton. The postcard with the image of Robert Mitchum is from 1947 and was not used in the performance. It has been kept with other material as an additional document collected by the artist in relation to the work.

- Davies' notes on *Anatomic Explosions* made in 2004 for *This Was Tomorrow* Exhibition at Tate Britain.
- Postcard with a picture of Robert Mitchum, 1947.
- Eight photos of *Anatomic Explosions* by Michael Broom.
- Copies of photos from an article in *Life Magazine*, 1967, p.88.
- A photo of *Anatomic Explosion* by Tom Picton.
- Enlarged photocopies of different photographs.
- Enlarged photocopies of contact sheets.

### Charles Street Event

Documents relating to an explosion that Davies demonstrated in a disused shop (formerly Paperback Bookshop) on Charles Street, Edinburgh on 28 October 1966. The demonstration happened at the request of BBC Scotland.

- Mackenzie Rhind: 'Look out! It's art', *Scottish Daily Express*, 29 October 1966. Press cutting attached to a paper sheet.

- Ian Ramsay: 'Bang! And a new art form emerges', *Scottish Daily Mail*, 29 October 1966. Two copies of press cutting.
- Davies' post-event description. Typewritten.

### Beach

Documents relating to an exhibition in January 1967, Adam House, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, followed by a filmed destruction event at Grantham Foreshore, Edinburgh, 4 March 1967. The exhibited object was a tabletop made from a door with leftovers from a dinner party glued to it, which was later destroyed in an event on the seashore, resulting in the film-work 'Beach'.

- 'Dishing up art for the hungry', *Scottish Daily Mail*, 31 January 1967. Press cutting.
- James Gray: 'Artistic Taste', entry in 'Now Scots crafts call the tune', *Edinburgh Evening News*, 30 January 1967. Press cutting.
- [Photo of the tabletop with caption], *The Scotsman*, no date. Press cutting.
- 'Blasted art to go on film', *Evening News and Dispatch*, 3 March 1967; 'Why Ivor blew up the table', *Sunday Mail*, 5 March 1967. Two press cuttings mounted on one sheet.
- 'Destructive art... or a new way to spend an afternoon on the beach – blowing up a load of old dummies', *Evening News and Dispatch*, 6 March 1967. Press cutting.
- 'Artistic Crumbs', *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*, 3 February 1967. Press cutting.

## BOX 6

### DIAS Contact Sheets

Large-scale contact sheets of Tom Picton's photographs of DIAS. The Viennese Actionists were a group of radical performance artists from Austria, involving Otto Mühl (1925-2013), Hermann Nitsch (b.1938) and Günter Brus (b.1938), who travelled to the UK for the first time to take part in DIAS. They were accompanied by filmmaker Kurt Kren (1929-1998) and artist, curator and theoretician Peter Weibel (b.1944). Robin Page (1932-2015) was a British-born artist involved with the international Fluxus network in the 1960s.

- Five sheets showing the Viennese Actionists with Susan Cahn, *Ten Rounds for Cassius Clay*, St Brides Institute, London, 13 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing Viennese Actionists with Kurt Kren, Al Hansen and Robin Page, *Simultaneous actions*, St Brides Institute, London, 16 September 1966
- Contact sheet showing various events including

Juan Hidalgo, Africa Centre, date unknown.

- Two contact sheets showing Yoko Ono's *Shadow Piece*; participants include Ivor Davies; Free School Playground, 13 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing participants at the Symposium including Anthony Scott, Bob Cobbing Gustav Metzger, John Latham, Africa Centre, 11 September 1966, 11.00 – 13.30 pm.
- Contact sheet featuring talk by Yoko Ono and others (Biff Stevens and Dick Wilcox), Africa Centre, 11 September 1966, 5.30 – 7.30pm.
- Contact sheet showing Wolf Vostell, Al Hansen, Gustav Metzger, Juan Hildago, Africa Centre, 11 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing Symposium session 'Reading texts from their publications', chaired by Gustav Metzger, Africa Centre, 11 September, 3.00 – 5pm.
- Contact sheet showing preparations for Ralph Ortiz *Piano Destruction*, Duncan Terrace, London.
- Two contact sheets showing Ralph Ortiz *Piano Destruction*, London 1966; film crew (BBC) present.
- Contact sheet showing police intervention at DIAS, including Günter Brus, John Sharkey, Ralph Ortiz, Gustav Metzger, St Brides Institute, 16 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing Anthony Scott's performance and people gathered at the Free School Playground.
- Contact sheet showing Robin Page's performance, Free School Playground, possibly 13 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing Al Hansen, *Event with Motor-Cycle* audience include Scott, Lebel, Metzger, Cobbing, Free School Playground, 12 September 1966.
- Two contact sheet showing Werner Schreib's performance, Free School Playground, 12 September 1966.
- Two contact sheets showing Pro Diaz, *Painting with Explosives*, Free School Playground, 12 September 1966.
- Two contact sheets showing Wolf Vostell, Ono, Pro Diaz and performance with inflatable pool with Robin Page, Al Hansen, Juan Hidalgo, Brus and other actionists.
- Two contact sheets showing Biff Stevens, *On Pneumatic Environments*, Battersea Park, London 11 September 1966.
- Contact sheet showing Herman Nitsch's *OM Theatre (5<sup>th</sup> Abreaktionsspiel)*, St Brides Institute, 16 September 1966.
- Six contact sheets showing Herman Nitsch's *OM Theatre (5<sup>th</sup> Abreaktionsspiel)*, police intervention,

St Brides Institute, 16 September 1966.

- Contact sheet showing the Viennese Actionists with Susan Cahn, *Ten Rounds for Cassius Clay*, St Brides Institute, London, 13 September 1966.
- Seventeen A3 copies of various DIAS contact sheets by Tom Picton.

## BOX 7

### Egg

Documents relating to Davies' first event with the Edinburgh Experimental Group (Graeme Farnell and Ray Halstead) in the basement yard of a house in Buccleuch Street, Edinburgh, 10 March 1967. Charles Marovitz (1934-2014) was an American critic, theatre director and playwright. Photographs by Derek Brake and Peter Davies.

- *Press Release*, Edinburgh University Dramatic Society, March 1967.
- 'More of a Mishappening', *The Scotsman*, 13 March 1967; Charles Marovitz: 'Life is brimful of happenings', *The Scotsman*, 21 March 1967. Two press cuttings mounted on one sheet.
- 'Cello, three books (but no plot), and then... A new art form is hatched', *Evening News and Dispatch*, 11 March 1967.
- Davies' letter to the editor of *The Scotsman*, 20 March 1967.
- Eight photos of the event, one with overlay. Photographers: Peter Davies & Derek Brake.
- Event score.

### Still Life Story I.

Documents relating to Davies' event with the Edinburgh Experimental Group, 20 June 1967 (12.30 am). The event was part of Experimental Theatre '67, a two-day gathering of university dramatic societies (19-20 June 1967) at Dunelm House, Durham University, organised by Tim Horrocks and Clare Blenkinsop. John Baldwin was a student participant. Photographer unidentified.

- Ivor Davies' post-event description, no date, with a photo from unidentified source.
- Two letters from John Baldwin to Ivor Davies. no date.
- Ivor Davies' post-event description, no date.
- Programme booklet, 'Experimental Theatre '67', Durham University Theatre.
- *This Was Tomorrow, Art & The 60s* (Tate Britain) announcement in *The Sunday Times*, no date. Press cutting.
- Notes by Ivor Davies.
- Eleven photos with annotations by Ivor Davies, photographer unidentified.



## Still Life Story II.

Documents relating to Davies' event with the Edinburgh Experimental Group, 30 June and 5-9 July 1967 (10.30 pm), Traverse Theatre Club, Edinburgh. This event was part of the Edinburgh Festival (30 June-9 July 1967).

- Event score.
- Letter from Rikki Noyce to Ivor Davies, 29 June 1967.
- Letter from Graeme Farnell to Ivor Davies, no date.
- [part of a letter in Davies' handwriting].
- Ivor Davies' post-event description.
- Photo of the event. *Beaverbrook Newspapers*, Edinburgh.
- Collage-poster
- Express Staff Reporter: 'Explosive, that's Norma's new part', no date. Press cutting.
- Nick Hart-Williams and Andrew Young: 'Seven', in 'Scottish Showplace', *Scottish Daily Mail*, 30 June 1967. Press cutting.
- 'Theatre of Blood and Old Iron', 1 July 1967; Allen Wright: 'Experiment at Traverse A Failure', unidentified source. Two press cuttings kept together.
- 'Buffoonery', *Scottish Daily Express*, 8. Press cutting.
- James Donaldson: 'A drama in the raw', *Scottish Daily Express*, 3 July 1967, 9. Press cutting
- Mackenzie Rhind: 'Striptease to music at the Traverse', *Scottish Daily Express*, 7 July 1967.
- Margaret Hignett: 'The man who loves to shock you', *Daily Record*, 14 July 1967. Press cutting.
- Dick Wilcocks: 'Multi media RAW MEAT spectacle', *International Times*, No.17. July 28 – Aug 13, 1967. Full magazine and photocopies.

## BOX 8

### Still Life Story III

- Documents related to Davies' 'multimedia spectacle' with members of the Edinburgh Experimental Group, 16 December 1967 (7.30-8.05 pm). Bristol Arts Centre, 4-5 King Square, Bristol. Part of *Mixture! And Experimental Evening of Film and Theatre* initiated by Ian Breakwell (1943–2005), British artist and art organiser. The evening also included *Buffet Car News* (performance) by Breakwell and *The Brig* (filmed production) by the Living Theatre Company, New York, filmed by Jonas Mekas (b.1922).
- Letter from Ian Breakwell to Ivor Davies, collage and flyer for the Trenchmouth Conference, 29

February Lower Theatre Arts Block, Cathays Park, Cardiff.

- Two postcards of the band Pictures of Dorian Gray.
- List of event participants, handwritten by Davies'.
- *MIXTURE!*, Flyer, Bristol Arts Centre, 8 March 1968.
- Programme for *Still Life Story III* and Film Programme: HUNGER.
- Floor plan of the Bristol Arts Centre theatre.
- Photograph of the event, unidentified source.
- Brown envelope addressed to Davies, Edinburgh, 23 Jan 1968. Unidentified.
- Prop list for event.
- Two letters from Ian Breakwell to Ivor Davies, 15 September 1967. (incomplete) and 16 November 1967.
- Stage lighting equipment list, handwritten.
- Instructions.
- Detailed description of scenes for rehearsal on 15 December at Bristol Arts Centre], 14 December 1967.
- List of slides used in the event, sketch for stage-set and notes on equipment and actions.
- Seven paper mask collages from Marks & Spencer, three further paper bags used in the event.

## BOX 9

### Adam on St Agnes' Eve

Documents relating to Davies' multimedia 'experimental theatre' event on 21 January 1968 (7.30-8 pm). Part of Swansea Arts Festival, Debates Chamber, University College of Swansea. Organised by John Plant (student at University College Swansea at the time). Mrs G.P.Rees was the Treasurer at Swansea University Student's Union. Bram A. Moore was the Swansea & West Wales Area Commander of The Salvation Army. Photographs by Stephen Hibbs and A.J.Brooks (Department. of Metallurgy).

- Letter from John Plant to Ivor Davies, 18 September 1967, with envelope.
- Letter from Mrs. G.P. Rees to Ivor Davies, 2 January 1968.
- Letter from the Western Mail (K.R. James, Area Sales Development Representative) to Ivor Davies, 2 January 1968.
- Letter from John Plant to Ivor Davies, January 1968.
- Letter from Bram A. Moore to Ivor Davies, 3 January 1968.
- Letter from Peter Holliday to Ivor Davies, January 1968.

- Letter from Paul Barrett on behalf of THE 98% MOM AND APPLE PIE WEST COAST ROCK AND ROLL BAND to Ivor Davies, 22 January 1968.
- Letter from Ian Breakwell to Ivor Davies 29 January 1968.
- Two letters from A.J. Brooks and Stephen Hibbs to Ivor Davies, 1968.
- Letter from Stephen Hibbs to Ivor Davies, 21 January 1969.
- Four letters from John Plant to Ivor Davies: 27 March 1969, 1969 (no date), 11 June 1969, 16 January 1970: and programme for Swansea University Arts Festival 1970.
- Letter from Stephen Hibbs to Ivor Davies, 6 February 1989, with envelope.
- Phone numbers and names.
- Five sheets with notes.
- Nine tickets for the event, 21 January 1968.
- Ivor Davies' drawing and cue notes.
- Receipts for payment from Water Ellis & Son Ltd, for 350 brown paper bags, January 1968 and List of expenses, no date.
- Floor plan, Debates Chamber, Union House, Swansea, 1968.
- Thirty photos by Stephen Hibbs, and large scale photocopies.
- Ivor Davies' four cue sheets with notes, different versions.
- Post-event description by Ivor Davies.
- Four brown paper bags with printed text advertising the event, used in the event.
- Two paper boxes with collaged paper cuttings of eyes and lips worn as prop in the event.
- Video documenting interviews with John Plant and Ivor Davies at Swansea University, 30 April 2014. Interviewer: Judit Bodor. Camera: Rhodri Davies (Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, Cardiff).

## BOX 10

### The Edinburgh Experimental Group

Documents relating to the Edinburgh Experimental Group and its performances in general. 'The aim of THIS group is to develop an experimental workshop for the creation of new theatrical forms – emphasizing for example visual and structural elements of theatre – using new sounds – word patterns and other media of as wide and free a range as possible.' (Press Release, 1967)

- David Goggin's typescript for an article in *Student*, 23 November 1967.
- Dave Goggin: 'Off-scene', *Student*, 23 November 1967. Press cutting.
- Ivor Davis, Mike Yorke and Phil Bevis: 'It's All Happening', *Student*, 23 November 1968. Press

- cutting.
- Programme for the Edinburgh Experimental Group's Festival of Experimental Arts, Edinburgh 2–10 February 1968.

## Film and Video documentation

Filmed documentation of Ivor Davies' performances and events between 1966 and 1968. Documenters often unknown. The original recording of *Anatomic Explosions* was transferred onto tape by Pete Telfer and exhibited on a loop in *This Was Tomorrow* at Tate Britain in 2004. All recordings were then transferred onto a tape in a non-consecutive order, which was then exhibited as part of Davies' exhibition in Brno, Czech Republic, 2006. A further edit, showing *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* with the addition of still images by Chris Hardwick (Technical Officer AV, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, Cardiff) was exhibited as part of *I Cannot Escape This Place*, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, Cardiff 2011. Between 2013-2014, the original tapes were transferred onto a DVD at the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales (NSSAW). This time the films were arranged in a chronological order by the artist. The original tapes are now kept in the NSSAW on behalf of the artist under a long-term arrangement. The artist's recollection of the original order of the actions is kept with the films.

- *Prelude to Anatomic Explosions*, 1 September 1966, filmed by Bill Morris.
- *Anatomic Explosions*, DIAS, 13 September 1966, filmed by students.
- *Egg*, Edinburgh Experimental Group, 4 March 1967, filmographer unknown.
- *Beach*, 10 March 1967, filmographer unknown.
- *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, 21 January 1968, filmographer unknown.
- Edinburgh Experimental Group, 1968, filmographer unknown.

## DIAS U.S.A

Correspondence relating to the planning of *DIAS U.S.A* 1968 at Judson Memorial Church and the *Destruction in Art: Destroy to Create* exhibition at Finch College Museum of Art. Elayne H. Varian was the Director of Finch College Museum of Art in the 1960s. Jon Hendricks is an artist and curator involved with Fluxus. As the Director of the Judson Gallery at Judson Memorial Church in New York City he curated numerous *Destruction in Art* related events in 1967-68 and co-curated the exhibition *DIAS U.S.A 68*.

- Letter from Ralph Ortiz to Ivor Davies, 6 January 1967.
- Letter from Ralph Ortiz to Robin Page, no date.
- Letter from Gustav Metzger to Ivor Davies, 18 September 1967.
- Letter from Gustav Metzger to Ivor Davies, 23 October 1967.

- Letter from E.F. Varian to Ivor Davies , 12 October 1967.
- Letter from Ivor Davies to Mrs. John Varian at The Finch College Museum of Art, New York, 5 March 1968.
- Letter from Jon Hendricks to Ivor Davies, 9 February 1968.
- Letter from Jon Hendricks to Ivor Davies, 21 March 1968.
- E.H Varian: *Destruction in Art: Destroy to Create*. (Copy of exhibition catalogue).
- Letter from The Judson Memorial Church to Ivor Davies, undated. Photocopy.
- Notes by Gustav Metzger.
- *Contemporary Archaeology*, School of Art Watford College of Technology.
- *Rafael Montañez Ortiz. Years of the Warrior, Tears of the Psyche 1960-1968*. Symposium on Destruction Art accompanying an exhibition at the El Museo del Barrio, 1988.
- *Henri Chopin. Ideas Gallery. Graphic, objective and other poems*. Exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Gallery, London. 29 May – 30 June, 1974.
- *Yoko Ono*. Exhibition flyer, Riverside Studios, London, 1989-90.
- Sam Jones: 'Piece doesn't get a chance. Ono's image of naked breast offends Liverpudlians', *The Guardian*, 30 September 2004, 6. Press cutting.
- *Yoko Ono. Morning Beams for Portsmouth Cathedral*. Exhibition catalogue, Hampshire Sculpture Trust, 17 April – 17 May 2004.
- Clay Perry: 'Constellation: Photographs of the 1960s avant-garde art scene in London'. Exhibition brochure, England & Co., London. 1-23 May 2009.
- 'Technological Kindergarten: Gustav Metzger and Early Computer Art', *MUTE Magazine*, No. 26. Summer/Autumn 2003.
- Tony White: 'The acid-nylon technique (1960) by Gustav Metzger', *The Guardian Weekend*, 25 March 2006, 102. Press cutting.
- Richard Cork: 'Metzger's new bag: "I intend to draw and paint again"', Interview with Gustav Metzger', *The Times*, 19 October, 2004, 8-9. Press cutting.
- *Art of Liquid Crystals*. Press release.
- Collage of articles on ADA (i.e. Auto-Destructive Art).
- *Gustav Metzger*. Programme of events, poster and exhibition guide, MOMA Oxford, 1998.
- Judit Bodor: 'Interview with Gustav Metzger'. Digital video recording. Camera: Peter Telfer, November 2014.
- 'Devil in a grey beard' (Hermann Nitsch)', *The Guardian*, 15 November 1997, 6.

## BOX 11

### DIAS artists

A collection of later articles, catalogues, artworks and manuscripts relating to DIAS participants or with whom Davies corresponded in relation to destruction art. Documents relate to Werner Schreib, John Latham, Barbara Steveni, Mark Boyle, Ralph Ortiz, Henri Chopin, Yoko Ono, Gustav Metzger and Hermann Nitsch. Letters from the Guerilla Art Action Group (US) and the Art Workers Coalition (US) relate to Davies' correspondence with Jon Hendricks, one of the organisers of DIAS U.S.A.

- Folder with works by Werner Schreib.
- Letter from the Guerilla Art Action Group to Ivor Davies, undated.
- Letter from the Art Workers Coalition to Ivor Davies, 16 February 1971.
- Open letter from the Judson Three Defense Fund.
- *John Latham. The Spray Gun and the Cosmos*. Exhibition catalogue, Delays Saltoun, 29 February – 12 April 2008.
- John Wakler: *John Latham. The incidental person – his art and ideas*, (Hendon: Middlesex University Press) 1995.
- Simon Tait: 'John Latham. Awkward Artistic Visionary'. *The Independent*, 5 January 2006, 51.
- Michael McNay: 'John Latham. Radical and inspirational artist who courted controversy and pioneered conceptual art', *The Guardian Obituaries*, 7 January 2006, 35.
- *John Latham. Time Base and the Universe*. 4 July – 26 August 2006. Exhibition flyer, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton.
- *Art Placement Group*. Document compiled by Barbara Latham and Joan Hills.
- Mark Boyle: *Contrivances (Nocturne poems)*.
- Presentation by Mark Boyle at the Indica Gallery, flyer, July 1966.
- *Mark Boyle | The Boyle Family. The Institute of*

This archive catalogue was created as part of the doctoral research project 'Exhibiting the Ivor Davies Archive of Destruction (in) Art: an exploration of curatorial processes in presenting historical performance art in the Museum, through observation, case studies and practice', funded by an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, based at Aberystwyth University, supervised by Heike Roms, Nicholas Thornton and Jacqueline Yallop.

## Appendix 2

Judit Bodor, Exhibition design for *Silent Explosion* with list of works and notes for display, 2015.



# Ivor Davies: Silent Explosion



# Ivor Davies: Silent Explosion

Notes toward an Exhibition

by Judit Bodor

## Curating the archives of destruction: exhibition as performative curatorial act

Ivor Davies is one of the foremost figures in contemporary Welsh art but his contribution to the international avant-garde of the 1960s has often been overlooked in exhibition histories of the period. Davies was a leading organiser of the international Destruction in Art Symposium (DIAS) in London, 1966 where he presented live auto-destructive and event-structured work alongside artists such as Yoko Ono, Raphael Montanez Ortiz, John Latham and the Viennese Actionists. He also produced a series of multimedia performances in Durham, Bristol, Edinburgh and Swansea between 1966-1968. This exhibition *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* at National Museum Wales presents Davies' performances in the wider context of his lifelong interest in destruction as cultural and material transformation. The exhibition is also supported by a collaborative practice-led doctoral research project at the Theatre, Film and Television Department of Aberystwyth University focusing on presentation of archives of historical performance art in museums. As a doctoral researcher on this project, I have provided research and curatorial input into the development of the exhibition.

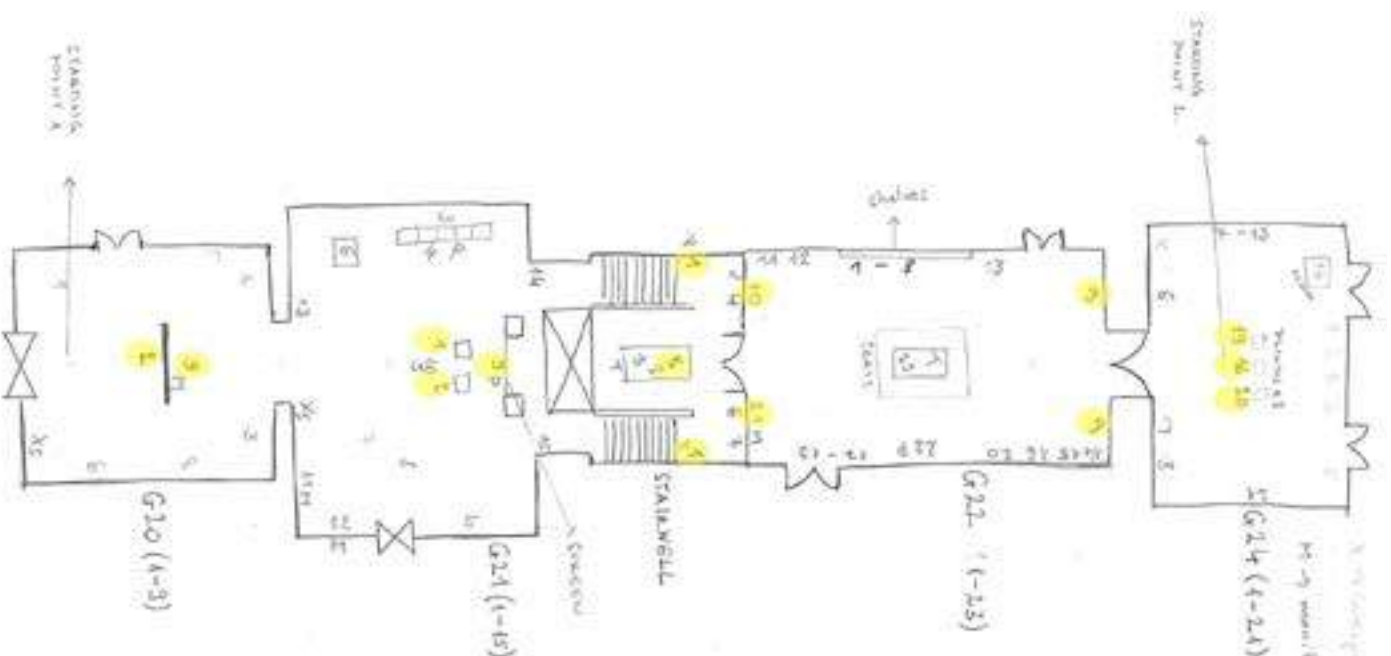
This document demonstrates research into the potential of performative curating as methodology to present historical performance art in the museum. The research adopts the term 'performativity' from theoretical discussions of histories, representation and reproduction of 'performance' developed since the late 1990s. Although the term was already used since the 1960s in linguistic philosophy (Austin, 1962) and literary theory (Barthes, 1975) to describe 'performative utterances' issued in language as 'speech-acts', it is now widely used in the field of Theatre and Performance Studies to refer to other 'performative acts' such as 'rehearsed practices' (Taylor 2003, p.3), 'theatrical' photographic documentation (Auslander 2006), or 'repetition' (Schneider 2001). Adopting this extended understanding of the term the research proposes performative curating as an active mode of mediation between artist, curator and viewer as agents sharing moments of production,

distribution and reception. As such the research not only investigates Ivor Davies' 1960s performance works as the content of the exhibition but the production of the exhibition itself as 'performative act.'

The exhibition as 'performative act' follows performance scholar Peggy Phelan's argument (Phelan 1993) for the power of 'the real' over 'the representational' (p. 3). In her seminal book *Unmarked* Phelan (1993, pp. 146-167) focused on the politics of re-production and / as re-presentation and critiqued 'the document / ary' approach of photographic images and art-historical description as unable to 'truthfully' re-produce and re-present performance. For Phelan the spatial and temporal determination of performance as historical event is non-negotiable and 'the degree [to which it] attempts to enter the economy of reproduction [so] it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology.' (p.146) Phelan thus argues the only appropriate form of practice in approaching performance as 'undocumentable event' was performative writing (p.148). I intend the act of exhibition-making to be similarly appropriate as response to the historical determination of performance art in a museum exhibition.

In so doing, this exhibition proposes the curatorial strategies of narrative exhibition making and exhibition-as-event as non-representational approaches to historical performance. Unlike chronological displays of archival documents aiming to represent or replace the historical event *Silent Explosion* generates and draws on oral, visual and textual archives to collaboratively produce an aesthetic environment. This document shows curatorial thinking and strategy particularly around exhibition design of narrative space in which to display archival, often ephemeral, images and objects.

Judit Bodor  
Co-curator



Ivor Davies:  
Silent Explosion  
Floorplan

### Gallery 20:

Paintings 19070s onwards

1. Beca Book (early 1990s) artist book
2. *The Writing on the Wall* I. (2001) assemblage
3. *The Writing on the Wall* II. (2001) assemblage
4. *Epynt* (2000-2003) assemblage
5. *Stuorffish* (2006) assemblage
6. *Death and Taxes* (2014) assemblage
7. *Self-portrait* (1942 – 2012) assemblage
8. *Harem Myth* (c.1959)
9. *Exercise Desert Rock VI, Operation Teapot*, 18 Feb – 15 May 1955, (film still)

### Gallery 21:

Adam on St Agnes' Eve, Happening, 21 Jan 1968

1. *Lips* (1967) sculptural residue from performance
2. *Eyes* (1967) sculptural residue from performance
3. 6 ft tall boxes, replicas from performance
4. *Durer: Adam and Eve* (1504), Projected image
5. Folder IDF22 - Material archive of performance
6. Grand piano (replica)

7. Old slide projector
8. Ironing Board

### 9. Video of performance

10. Sound and light reconstruction
11. Film: Swansea interview (JB)
12. Film: Heike Roms public oral history interview with Ivor Davies
13. Paper Masks
14. Ivor Davies with anatomical model, photograph (1966)
15. Postcard of Robert Mitchum (c. 1947)

### Stairwell:

Ravensbourne Symposium, 23 May 1966

1. Ivor Davies' art history slide collection
2. Jean Tinguely: *Hommage to NY* sound
3. Ivor Davies' notes for symposium paper
4. Correspondence
5. *Dom Sylvestre Houdeard's transcription*
6. Mark Boyle documents from ID's collection (IDF25006)
7. Gustav Metzger documents from ID's collection (IDF25)
8. On wall: [Untitled] artwork incorporating the original Ravensbourne poster

### Gallery 22

(approx. 300 documents relating to Destruction in Art Symposium and Ivor Davies' Happenings between 1966-68):

1. DIAS Correspondence (1965-1972)
2. DIAS press releases, programme (1966)

3. DIAS Papers (9-11 Sep 1966)
4. DIAS Ephemera (Sep 1966)
5. DIAS Press (Sep 1966 – 1986)
6. DIAS Newsletters (1966-67)
7. DIAS US Correspondence (1967-68)
8. DIAS photography by Tom Picton (Sep 1966)
9. DIAS Tom Picton group photos (Sep 1966)
10. *DIAS Poster (1966)*
11. Ivor Davies: *Destruction Demonstration*, Edinburgh (24 August 1966)
12. Ivor Davies: *Prelude to Anatomical Explosion*, Edinburgh (1 Sep 1966)
13. Ivor Davies: *Anatomical Explosions*, London (13 Sep 1966)
14. Ivor Davies: Charles Street Event, Edinburgh (Oct 1966)
15. Edinburgh Experimental Group: Egg, Edinburgh (4 Mar 1967)
16. Ivor Davies: Beach, Edinburgh (10 March 1967)
17. Ivor Davies: *Still Life Story I*. Durham (Jun 1967)
18. Ivor Davies: *Still Life Story II*. Edinburgh (Jul 1967)
19. Ivor Davies: *Still Life Story III*. Bristol (Dec 1967)
20. Edinburgh Experimental Group (1967-68)
21. Film: JB's interview with Gustav Metzger, Nov 2014
22. Video documentation of Happenings (1966-68)

23. Contextual material (books, publications)

### Gallery 24:

Early works + influences

1. *Letter with Coal* (1960-64) Assemblage
2. *Ruined city* (c.1954). Assemblage.
3. *Disintegrating* (c. 1956). Assemblage.
4. *Outside the City* (c. 1955) Painting.
5. *Falling* (c. 1956-57) Assemblage
6. *Spade* (c. 1957-1960s) Painting
7. *Reliquary* (1959) Painting
8. *Beach* (c.1959-61) Painting
9. *Contents of The Sea* (1959)
10. *Cosmic* (c. 1959) Painting
11. *Terrestrial Nocturnal* (1959) Painting
12. *Sicily* (1959) Painting
13. *Red Feeling* (c.1959-61) Painting
14. *Lezantine City* (c.1956-1957). Painting
15. *Self-portrait* (1957) Painting
16. Ivor Davies in Treharris (1940s) Photograph
17. *Untitled*, Assemblage.
18. *Untitled with Murdered figure*, (1950-51) Painting
19. Aristotle book (1753)
20. Medical book (19th Century)
21. Kinetic Objects from Barry Summer School (x7)

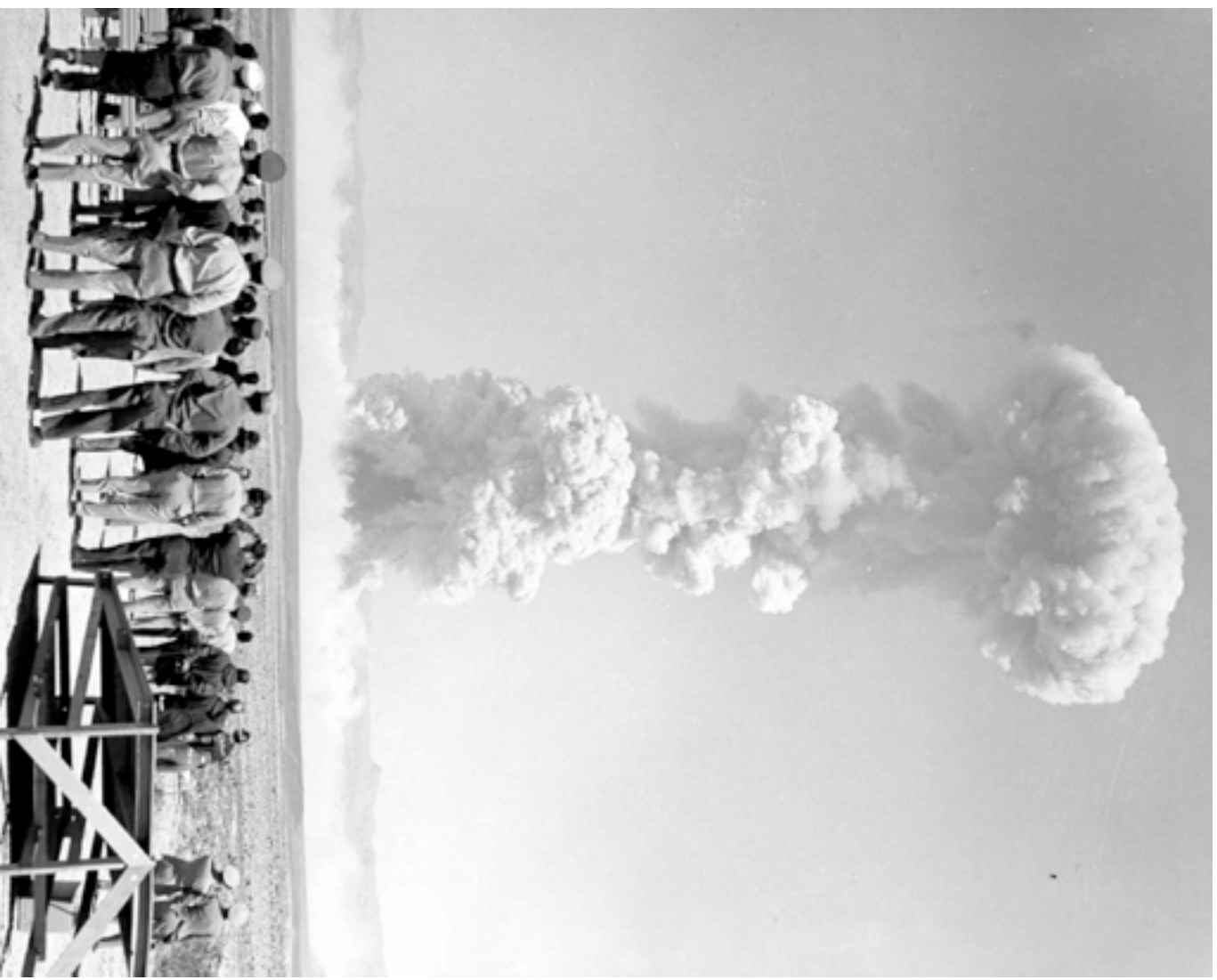


*Epynt* (2000-2003), assemblage.

*The Writing on the Wall I* (2001), assemblage.

Front on to the exhibition entrance *The Writing on the Wall I: Destruction of Language and Community* (2001) both occupies the centre of the gallery and foregrounds a spatialised 'triptych' with *Epynt* (left) and *The Writing on the Wall II* (right), themselves displayed on the rear wall on either side of the entrance to Gallery 21. The image of the three works together demonstrate Davies' concern with the destruction of Welsh language and identity. In creating *The Writing on the Wall I: Destruction of Language and Community*, Davies saved his family bible in half and fixed it onto a sack-cloth on either side of 19th century shotgun, a heirloom from his grandfather. The destruction of his cherished family possessions – according to the artist – links this work to a world 'where old and valuable things that are worth more than money are torn apart and shattered.' Positioned as the starting point of the exhibition the work is key as an example of Davies' lifetime interest in destruction apparent in both his performances and painting practice. The work, that is in the collection of the National Museum Wales won the Gold Medal at the 2002 National Eisteddfod. Although accepted in the established histories of art the artist used this work and his winnings to establish the Ivor Davies Award to support politically motivated artworks in the future.

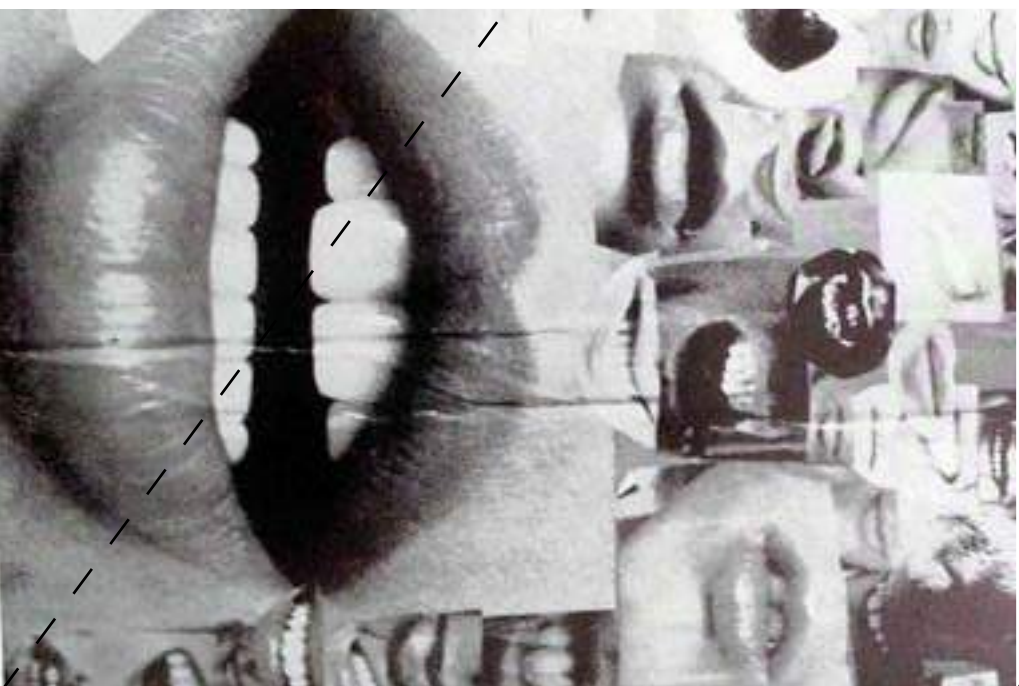
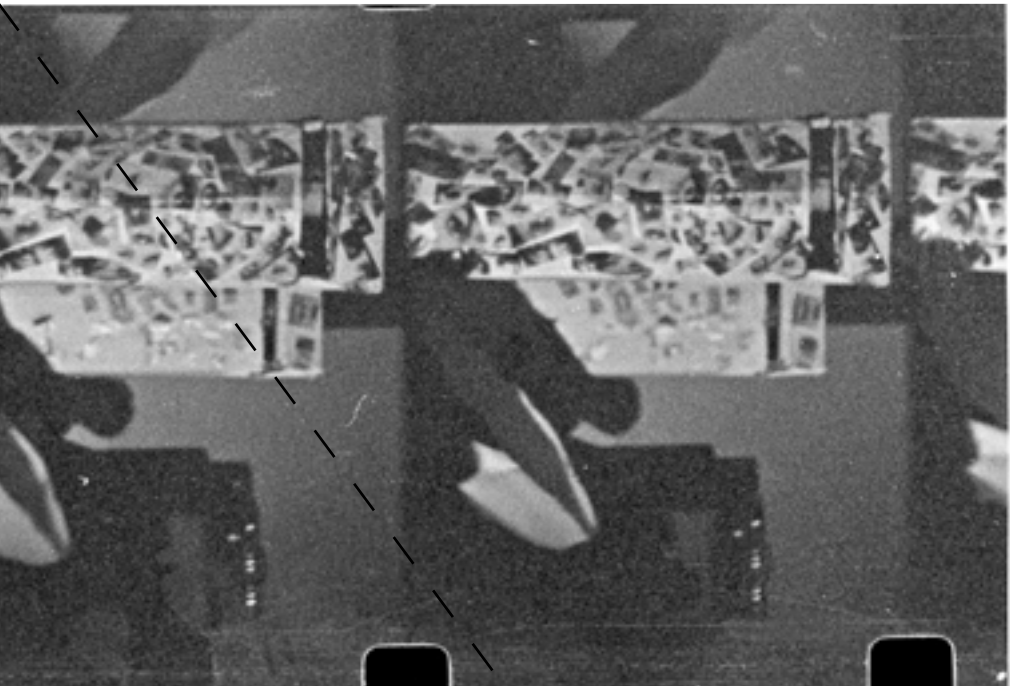
*The Writing on the Wall II* (2001), assemblage



*Exercise Desert Rock VI, Operation Teapot*,  
18 February – 15 May 1955, (still from archival footage film)

On 30 September 1966 Ivor Davies presented *Silent Explosion* at the Mercury Theatre, London as part of the Destruction in Art Symposium. DIAS, as commonly referred to, was an international gathering of artists, scientists and poets in 1966 that explored the postwar tendency of destruction in art and society. *Silent Explosion* was neither documented nor left any material traces behind. The artist later recalls, however, using appropriated silent film footage of an exploding atom bomb as part of the work. This reveals his interest in aesthetics of war and his way of working with recycled material. As Davies could not recall which documentary footage he specifically used, the exhibition features *Exercise Desert Rock VI, Operation Teapot* given it is a widely available documentary film of nuclear tests at the time. This footage shows a US military exercise at the Nevada Proving Grounds aiming to train troops and observe impact of nuclear explosions. The inclusion of the silent film also refers to the *Silent Explosion* of the exhibition title chosen reflects the limited capacity of document/ary archives to express the full sensory experience of the work over the historical delay between its occurrence and re-exhibition. That this parallels the issue of potentially aestheticising trauma as visual sensationalism is a dilemma running throughout Davies' critique of, yet attraction to, destruction. Also relevant are issues of 'authenticity' of archival material appropriated for use in Happenings and then their later exhibition.







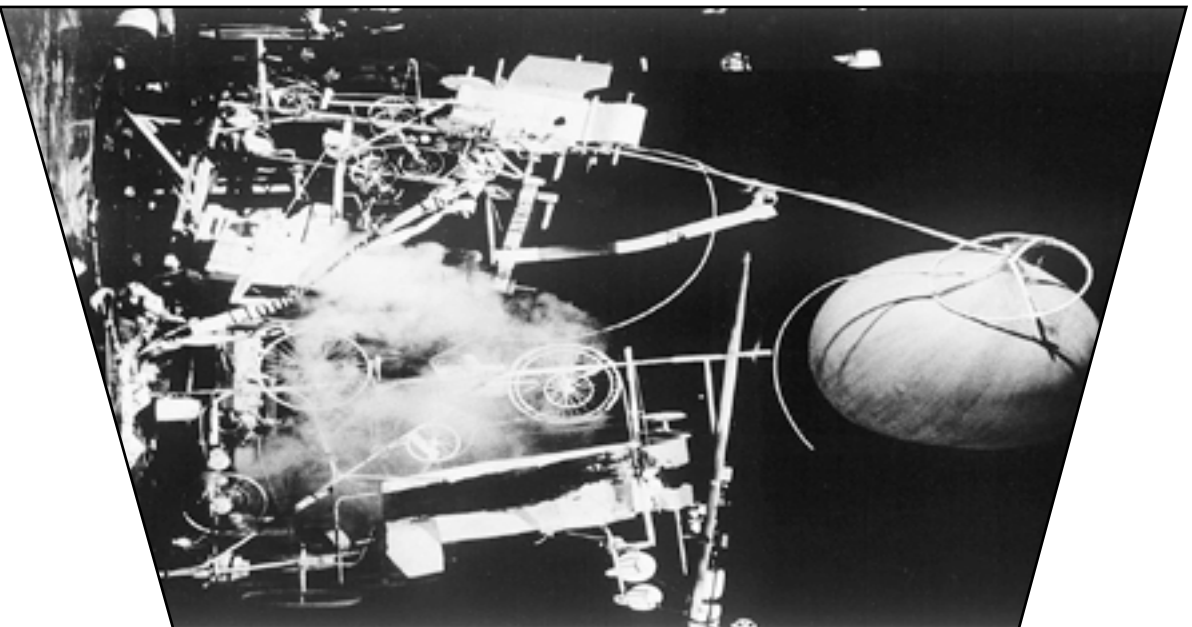
*Eyes and Lips* (1967) sculptural residue from performances including *Still Life Story I* and *II* (1967) and *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (1968).

Eyes and Lips are examples of the 'residual materiality' (Lillemose 2006, 120) of Davies' performance practice. These collaged cardboard boxes are typical of those worn as 'costumes' in *Still Life Story I* and *II*, multimedia performances presented in Durham and Bristol in 1967. The image of the 'walking collage-box' became a key element of Davies' work at the time as a result of his growing interest in kinetism. They featured also as part of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* at the Swansea Arts Festival organised by John Plant at Swansea University, 1968. In this event Davies intended the two boxes to represent male (eyes) and female (lips) character as part of a kinetic environment, which also included recorded voices, changing red, green and blue lighting

*Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, 21 January 1968 (Video documentation)

Davies' only multimedia performance event in Wales, *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (1968) was documented on 16 mm film and is projected in this exhibition as part of a kinetic environment 'recollecting' the work. This archival footage shows how the work centres on two performers standing in the light of a projected image of Albrecht Dürer's 1507 oil painting 'Adam and Eve'. These performers emerged into the projected image from behind, cutting through and destroying the screen. The work features in the exhibitio as a double projection in the sense that the film footage will be shown on a screen stretched between two pillars of the gallery suggesting a spatial as well as temporal restaging of the work.

and actions by live performers. The boxes are the only remaining 'authentic' object of the work. This authenticity should not mean the object stands for the whole work of which these *Eyes and Lips* structures were apart. In *Silent Explosion*, they are exhibited as part of a sensory audio visual environment which engages their viewer's experiential sense than detached retinal contemplation.



22



23

Ivor Davies' art history slide collection

Dom Sylvester Houedard manuscript for Manifesto of the Aesthetics of the Death Wish, 1966. Courtesy of Ivor Davies Archive.

*Destruction, Creation and Chemical Change* was a one-day symposium at Ravensbourne College of Art and Design on 23rd May 1966 initiated by Peter Holliday (1938-2003), a former student of Davies at Edinburgh University. Although often left out from histories of Destruction in Art, this event provided an opportunity for Gustav Metzger to discuss issues around destruction in public with other like-minded artists including Ivor Davies. Amongst the very few archival remains of this symposium is concrete poet Dom Sylvester Houedard's fourteen-page summary and transcription. An edited version was published in the August issue of 'Art and Artists' (1966) under the title 'The Aesthetics of a Death Wish', but the full manuscript in Davies' collection gives comprehensive insight into the whole event. Houedard's description gives the impression of Davies' contributions as performance lecture or an audio-visual 'collage' of reading over a looped slide projection and the sound of Jean Tinguely's Hommage to NY (1960). The lecture is

another example of Davies' recycling technique combining art historical knowledge and imagery with contemporary practice, a technique that he also used in his performances. The slides from the presentation are projected in the current exhibition simultaneously to Tinguely's audio loop and alongside presentation of Houedard's text, Davies' notes and other archival material. This is exhibited in the stairwell to suggest its historical importance as a 'step' toward the better known *Destruction In Art Symposium (DIAS)* whose more extensive archives are exhibited in the following gallery.

Transcription from DSH's manuscript describing Davies' lecture:

(...) Ivor Davies: "he traced four stage routes from representation that began with innovation in the subject matter (courbet's realism) that continued by investigation of the methodology of this new subject matter (impressionism: realism as light) to eventually reach autonomy of the subject matter (direct confrontation of the object itself: objet trouves collages assemblages) & that ultimately but a shift of attention transferred this appreciation on to the environmental nonart of our immediately surrounding world (eg aesthetic appreciation of objects like African masks hiterho collected for purely ethnographic interested). (...) absorbing this analysis – looking at the screened images often shown without comment (duchamp – dust latham – books Metzger-cardboards a broken window tinguely drawing-machine a boxed arrangement of possessions by a psychopath a mechanical 18th c unclothed puppet) - & listening to infolded quotes (newspapers & manifestos) & to the disc of tinguely's homage to newyork – I was involved at one level by the sheer precision of this eyecar tencnique – at another by needing to coordinate it with my own analysis – selfdestruction as the ultimate interiorisation of the object."



## DIAS and Metzger

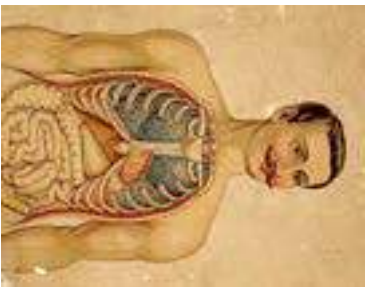
Davies has a unique personal collection of documents relating to the *Destruction in Art Symposium*, (DIAS) London 1966 including extensive personal correspondence, notes, lists, programme plans and published documents, posters, flyers, press cuttings, ephemera, photographs and video documentation as well as related catalogues, books, and articles about destruction in art. The extensive collection is a personal account of one artist's journey through all aspects of this international event across London.

The DIAS archival display in the current exhibition follows Davies' wish to present the entirety of his personal collection with as little curatorial intervention as possible. As these documents are normally kept in the artist's studio and therefore hidden from public the main aim of the display is to make these documents accessible. The format of the display with additional contextual material and seating area is designed to support learning and encourage further research into these otherwise rarely seen documents. Visitors will be able to discuss works as part of workshops and events and add additional information to documents on display.

Rarely seen documents will be a series of group photographs by Tom Picton that show

participants relaxed and interacting with public, presenting a different image from the repeatedly circulated iconic group photographs. Other documents will show evidence of how members of the International Committee contributed to the organisation of event. This will include the iconic DIAS poster and four DIAS Newsletters from 1967 and 1968 designed by John Sharkey, the manager of ICA and one of the most active organisers. The exhibition will also include correspondence between Metzger and Ivor Davies, and other letters charting the failed process of organizing DIAS US. Finally the exhibition will include Judit Bodor's interview with Gustav Metzger in 2014 in which the artist – amongst others – talks about the organization of DIAS as collective process, the role of the Committee and his aims to generate a network of like-minded artists.

Due to Kristine Stiles' doctoral research in the 1980s and exhibitions of Postwar art histories such as *Out of Actions* (1998), *This Was Tomorrow* (2005), *Art Under Attack*, (2013) and *Damage Control* (2013-2014) DIAS by now is considered in art history as one of the most significant artist meeting in the 20th century. Interestingly however these exhibitions presented DIAS only through a few documents and artworks cementing Metzger as its sole organiser. The exhibition of DIAS at Silent Explosion will help unpick the more layered histories of this internationally significant event.





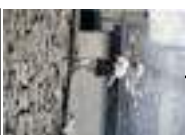
The final gallery includes some of the earliest works of Davies showing first signs of the artist's interest in destruction as he explored the physical properties of painting. Inspired by European visual artists such as Alberto Burri and Lucio Fontana, Davies introduced a disintegrative and corrosive material palette into his paintings including soil, coal, and scrap metal to transcend the picture plane and enter the physical world of postwar life. Amongst these artworks are three artifacts

from Davies' childhood that are key to the exhibition. A family photograph of the artist as a child sits between two books in the centre of the room. The photograph reverses chronological order by suggesting the exhibition is a journey of re-turning to origins and to how the many elements of Davies practice can be traced to these formative experiences of a childhood in wartime Treharris, South Wales. The books from his family library are 19th century medical book and an edition

of Aristotle's writings on anatomy. Davies remembers these as influential to his lifelong interest in the life and death of the human body. At the end of the exhibition and the beginning of life, there is a sense of the child looking out toward that exhibition of his own future life's work. 'Unlike The Writing On The Wall at the exhibition opening where Davies destroyed family possessions, these final objects are cared for as precious ephemera under protective glass on plinths.



Aristotle, 1753



Ivor Davies in Treharris, 1936.  
Family photograph.



Medical book, 19th Century





## Appendix 3

Judit Bodor, Conversation with Pedro Lagoa. [Edited transcription of artist interview on May 20, 2014.]

20th May 2014<sup>i</sup>

JB: I have read an interview with you where you said 'destruction' as a theme was already part of your previous work. My first question is what is your interest in destruction and what sort of works you have been referring to?

PL: I started a project called *Record Breaking Party* in 2007. I organised the first party in a venue in Frankfurt asking people to bring the vinyl records they hated the most in exchange for drinks.<sup>ii</sup> I would then play the records one by one and when people got fed up I would just throw the record on the dance floor and start playing another one leaving people to do whatever they wanted with them.

JB: It seems this event was about the physical destruction of objects.

PL: Exactly, and also about exploring gift economy like Potlatch. After this party I thought about a second part of the project, which I wanted to be related to the event but exist autonomously. I collected the broken pieces of the records from the party and melted all the vinyl into one black cube. I then presented the black cube as a minimalist sculpture on a plinth in a different space along with a cut up text put together from the titles of the destroyed albums. The title of the work was the alphabetically ordered names of all the artists whose records were destroyed.

JB: When and how did you start the *Archive of Destruction*?

PL: Not long after. I think *Record Breaking Party* made me realise that I was interested in destruction as an iconoclastic impulse, maybe not in a sense of shocking people but of trying to break with established canons. The archive started with an exhibition in London. I got an invitation to take part in a group exhibition in a space called FormContent. The starting point for artists, that the curators proposed, was the idea of academia.<sup>iii</sup> I think they were all finishing their MA studies at Goldsmiths at the time so maybe it had something to do with that. I wasn't interested in producing a direct comment and I also wanted to bring in what I was interested in at the time, which was collecting, and the relationship between working against memory and preserving it. I thought presenting an archive would also provide a sort of semi-academic structure.

JB: What is your strategy of collecting and ordering the material you collect?

PL: I didn't think about ordering the material until I first presented the collection. For collecting I had some principles. I knew for example that I wanted to collect things relating to destruction of physical objects and also abstract concepts and philosophies around destruction but I was not interested in collecting documents about the destruction of living beings in general because I simply couldn't keep a critical distance. I was also looking at how institutional archives work and the narratives that archives produce through categorising, cataloguing but I knew that I didn't want to order the things that I collect as part of one overarching narrative. I also knew I didn't want to arrange the material alphabetically or chronologically but would rather use association as a guide.

JB: How did you present the archive for the first time?

PL: I knew what I didn't want to do with the collection but I was not sure what I did want. One of the curator, however, was quite eager to be involved with the archive so we agreed that during the exhibition he would work with the collection in public creating his own system for ordering the material.<sup>iv</sup> He proposed to use Francis Bacon's ideas

around construction and destruction as a basis for organisation.<sup>v</sup> The installation itself was very modest with a table and some boxes with documents, and a TV for videos. The curator was sitting there during the opening hours of the exhibition going through the documents.

JB: Was there any audience interaction?

PL: I don't know because I was not there all the time but people could of course read and look at all the material. At that time I was not that much into talking to people.

JB: What strikes me that in this installation the order of things were out of your control?

PL: I was trying to be subversive in how archives work and allow the idea of destruction and chance to come into play.

JB: Since then there have been many other manifestations of the *Archive of Destruction*. As an artist / curator what is your approach to presentation?

PL: I usually take a bit out of the context of where the archive is presented. For example the *Quagmire Fields Section* was in a very small room, maybe about 10sqm, as part of a group show with nine artists who work mostly with sculpture. In this case I knew my space was limited and so I decided that I would only present a very reduced selection of the archive relating to destruction of artworks and structures. My work also played with the context of the gallery. I for example presented documents about multiple name projects to think about authorship in art. There was also a very nice text, *Erostratus* by Fernando Pessoa, that somebody stole, at least half of it.<sup>vi</sup> It reflected on the story of Erostratus, a Greek man who burned down the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the world, just to become famous. The authorities at the time created a law forbidding anyone to say his name, but of course it was exactly through this act of violence that his name survived. The book's subtitle is *The Search for Immortality*. It takes Erostratus' story as a starting point and develops as both a reflection and a critical exercise on the life and 'immortality' of artists and their works.

JB: You presented a copied archive as artwork. Did visitors understand it as artwork or as contextual material to be taken away? Something replaceable or disposable even?

PL: Yes, the latter definitely happened.

JB: Did you mind?

PL: Partly yes, because if somebody takes documents away it means other people can't access them. I don't replace the lost material during the exhibition period. For example the book I was just telling about, *Erostratus* is about 200 pages. I think somebody was reading it in the exhibition but didn't have time to get through the whole thing so s/he must have decided to take half of it home. Another example was in Korea when I also presented the archive in 2011. There was a concert the night before **one** film screening in the space. On the day of the screening I realised that one of the films I wanted to show **was** missing and it turned out it was skipped after the concert.

JB: There was also a *Museological Section* of the archive.

PL: Yes.

JB: Again, it looks like you played with the institutional context, the principles of categorisation in a collection.

PL: Yes, I was trying to replicate the museum's classification system to organise my archive. At the end I presented the entirety of my archive but the group of documents that fitted under the museum's categories was much smaller than the group of documents that didn't fit.

JB: What was your idea for this current *London Branch*?

PL: The idea was to have an autonomous space for the archive. So far the archive was exhibited in the context of group exhibitions in galleries or in museum spaces. This time I wanted to work with the material in the studio without the presence of other works around but in dialogue with the context of London or people from London. The idea is that the archive is growing during the residency and reflects my experience here.

JB: So people can donate documents to the archive or give you ideas on what to read and collect?

PL: Yes, very much so and I try to incorporate them after a critical analysis.

JB: The way you organise the material also has a sculptural aesthetic. Can you tell me a bit more about how do you arrange the archive in the space.

PL: In this particular case, I had another studio at first, quite a bit smaller than this, and I was trying to install the archive thinking about that space but it was very complicated as it was so small. But in general I wanted neutral forms for the display, basic geometrical shapes, very functional. Secondly, I wanted to intervene in the architecture of the space that is why I designed the box shelves to stick out of the wall, they divide the space so you can also have some privacy. This was more evident in the first studio, given the dimensions of the room. When I got this larger studio I was thinking of what to do as this space has a very different character from the other one. I was thinking about whether I could just install the shelves in the same way and keep the logic of organising the material as I did before? There are of course limitations when you transport things from one space to another.

JB: Can you talk me through some of the documents and how you group them?

PL: Yes, for example here is a 1939 atlas, which I opened on a page that shows Europe at the time next to it Céline's *Journey to the End of the Night* from 1932, a brilliant anti-war 'manifesto' of a kind. Then Fritz Lang's *Doctor Mabuse: The Gambler* from 1922, which in a way anticipated the coming war, then we have *Fantômas* by Louis Feuillade from 1913-14 close to Bataille's *The Psychological Structure of Fascism* from 1933 and the 1949 *Genealogy of Fanaticism* by E. M. Cioran. We also have Gustav Metzger's manifestos, which are from a later period but very much in debt to the Second World War as well as to the changes that resulted of technological developments after the war.<sup>vii</sup> Then over there we have a William Morris tapestry sample, which championed the idea of crafts instead of mass production. In another group are documents from before the Second World War by avant-garde artists who proposed ideas that integrated art and society and related to the rise of industrial production and of anarchism and revolution in art, like Duchamp, Malevich, Bakunin. I also have Pasolini talking about his film *120 Days of Sodom*, which makes a bridge between post 2WW and Sade's context of the French Revolution. Then we have a lot

of documents of Dada, Debord and the Situationists arranged around a bottle of an Italian anarchist wine, which relates to the context of cafés, like the Cabaret Voltaire, places for outsiders, where a lot of revolutionary groups converged. Then we arrive to a group of documents I arranged around iconoclastic actions. So, even if it is not clear at first sight why certain documents are arranged together, there is a logic based on association. I also had plans for a sort of café, space together with the archive, which I had no real opportunity for until now. The idea of having a café was to create an informal space that is both a platform to activate the documents of the archive and a place where visitors could hang around. The closest I got to this was *Conversations With Yi Sang* that took place in Seoul, in 2011.

JB: Here I see an index card box listing everything in alphabetical order.

PL: Yes, although everything is very loosely arranged I need to have at least a half-organised archive to remember what I have. Otherwise I would get to a point when I couldn't work any more. I have maybe 700 documents already and my memory is not that brilliant.

JB: So when one exhibition of the archive ends you keep the documents in alphabetical order and next time the archive is presented you re-arrange the content in a different way?

PL: Yes, that's basically the idea. Things gain different meaning through new arrangements.

JB: What is this diagram on the wall? Does this relate to what is in the physical space here?

PL: This is the appropriation of a scientific diagram by Edward L. Youmans. I altered it to show what you can expect from the archive, how it is organised. <sup>viii</sup>

JB: Does it help visitors understanding how the archive is organised?

PL: No, but it gives you some clues of its content. I am not good at all in science but I was trying to come up with a scientific formula for destruction or for the forces that operate in moments of destruction. When you destroy something that affects the past, it also affects the future as well as the present. You suppress some things in the past by erasing their memory, which creates disruption in the present as it destabilises power relationships. But then out of that action of destruction something new comes out in the future.

JB: What are the colours on the diagram, the black and red squares, are they meaningful in the context of the archive?

PL: No, that is in the original diagram. I erased the texts but not the visual image.

JB: I would like to turn to the film now.

PL: Just to say a couple more things about the archive in general. I wanted it to be modular, so it is now fixed in a way but it's possible to have the box-shelves very easily assembled in other ways. The structure reflects the way I usually work with the documents, by association, a subjective way of arrangement that can change.

JB: Are the boxes the same size?

PL: No, maybe two are the same.

JB: Is the size significant?

PL: No it's only to do with the limitations of the space.

JB: You also have audio material in the archive. Is it from the Internet?

PL: I buy some and I copy others, which is the same as I collect writings.

JB: Do you think about copyright issues when you present the archive?

PL: I don't but other people do.

JB: Did you ever have a problem?

PL: Just recently, for the first time. There was an exhibition in Porto at Museum Serralves and they invited me to present the archive.<sup>ix</sup> I gave them a proposal, which I have worked on for a whole month. But when **the board of directors** realised that they might have copyright issues if they exhibit my archive they rejected the idea to include the archive in their exhibition space. So I needed to rethink my approach very quickly.

JB: What did you do?

PL: I presented the *Educational Service of the Archive*, which includes the film *[a cut through the] archive of destruction*

JB: Can you tell me about that film?

PL: That also started here in London in 2007, when the curators wanted me to participate in a roundtable on archives. I didn't really feel like talking in public about archives as I had just started collecting and in actuality my focus was much more on destruction than archives. So I just used the material I have collected to develop a film collage. At first I thought I would just make a really long video of documents, long enough so people get tired and don't want to ask questions. But then I thought if I am proposing to organise the archive in a way to avoid a dominant narrative and repetition, if each display of the archive is trying to bring in something different, then the film should go in that direction as well. I had a lot of visual examples as well as texts that could be cut up and recombined in different ways.

JB: Is the film is another way of ordering the archival material?

PL: Yes, but every time I present it I make a new edition removing some things and adding others to the sequence, or just changing the sequence to create a different narrative. But also - and that is why the video became part of the Educational Service - the film gives insight into both how the archive works and an overview of what people might find in it.

JB: Did you call it 'educational' service to be allowed in the exhibition?

PL: No, the *Educational Service* started in Korea in 2011 where I got fed up with lots of people asking me what was the work about, and what was the 'meaning' of the work. I think if I have to explain it over and over again it kills the idea, the work then becomes an illustration of my speech. In Serralves they were also concerned of me showing the film in the exhibition as it still included appropriated material so it was presented in the Library, which worked well as a context for an archive. I was happy with that arrangement because people had to pay to get into the exhibition but they could see my work for free in the library!

JB: Do you see the archive as an artwork or as something functional, educational?

PL: I think the archive is to be used but the way of how I arrange it is obviously informed by my arts practice and not an archivist practice. It is a functional installation and is also informed by aesthetic decisions, both of which are subordinated to the main concept of the project.

JB: Tell me about the website.

PL: The website is there to have some documentation of projects [with the archive].

JB: So you haven't thought about the website as another aesthetic manifestation of the archive?

PL: I did think about it, even if for a very simple purpose only. I regularly collect articles from online newspapers or magazines, I save those pages where I find something that can relate to the archive, but it became so much that I lost track of what's stored, and for a moment I thought a webpage could be a place where it would make sense to simply paste these articles as I read them, as a sort of scrapbook that could be easily updated and that doesn't need to have a particular aesthetic. I guess I already discarded that idea, and in the end I think I'll most likely just go through the stuff one day and end up printing it as a sort of newspaper of destruction related news. Other than that, the idea of having the archive available online to be consulted is something I'm not particularly interested in.

JB: But you are not interested in a web as an organisational tool for the archive, a mode of display or a way to reach more people who cannot see your installations? The website documents the installations but doesn't really show the content of the archive ...

PL: Yes that's true, but I am not fond of the Internet as a media for my work. I like engaging in dialogue with people in person and enjoy the chance encounters with people walking through the archive ... it is something that is hard to replicate online. The chance for surprises is much reduced and the Internet is a much less playful experience.

JB: What about the titles of the archive sections? Some of them are quite descriptive such as *Geological Department*, *Museological Department* or *Archaeological Department* but others are abstract such as the *Department of Stuffed Geniuses*.

PL: Yes, in the beginning it was just to distinguish between the different presentations but then some departments started to further develop, which made me think about coming up with categories that are not descriptive. The *Stuffed Geniuses Department* is actually quite descriptive once you know the context within which the archive was exhibited. It was installed in the house of Yi Sang, a modernist Korean poet, whose

work was quite subversive for his time and context. The idea was to engage with his legacy somehow. I didn't want to sink into nostalgia or comment on how great he was. I wanted to push things towards the present and open up his ideas in relation to a wider context of the avant-garde. One of his books starts with a sentence "Have you ever seen the Stuffed Genius?" and I thought the way he was writing was really to think about writing, so in a sense it was research into writing. A stuffed genius is somebody who is stuck, stuffed, cannot move forward. I used these words to think about the possibility of new departures, ask where do we go from here.

JB: It looks like the development of the archive is in a way opportunistic and the arrangement depends on the context where you are invited to present it. But I wonder how you would like to present the archive ideally?

PL: This current *London Branch* is my proposal, I wanted to come here to figure out exactly that.

JB: What's the future of the archive?

PL: That's a good question. It has been developing very organically so far and I think I would like to take some time now to develop research about certain documents in the collection, as well as use research to give it some consistency and fill some gaps. Then I would like to work a bit more with ideas around display. Ideally, I would like to install it somewhere for a longer period, six months or even a year where I could work and experiment with how to make information physical, which is one angle of the project I am not yet satisfied with. I would also like to develop side departments where I could work on things that relate less directly to what is in the archive and more with the idea of archives and memory.

JB: So it is still a work in progress?

PL: Very much so, I feel like I hardly started. Lately my work on the archive has been developing more as research other than production. I've been working slowly on different ideas and projects at the same time, and these have been leading me to become increasingly interested in the processes of creation of historical narratives. Archives in general are often used to legitimize and enforce specific historical narratives, mostly politically motivated, thus it seemed fitting to work on those subjects from a point of view of destruction. This process has been leading me to delve into a series of different topics, ranging from relations between memory, historical amnesia and revisionism to the consequences as the result of the suppression of the visibility of objects and documents – either through iconoclasm or through privatization that denies access to images that belong to a common heritage or through the substitution of the 'original' object by copies - and how these processes can affect the creation of new historical narratives.

JB: Your work with the archive merges processes of production and interpretation and therefore the role of the artist and of the curator. Can I ask how you see your role as artist curator when you present the archive in institutional context, where supposedly there is another curator present. How do you see your authorship over the presentation of the archive and your relationship to the other curator?

PL: I can't really say I see myself as a curator when working with presentations of the archive. I think the way I work with the pre-existing documents, other people's works, is more akin to ideas of collage and appropriation, that are rooted in an artistic tradition. One can obviously argue that the roles of artist, curator and even archivist are present



in this project and that their borders are fluid or ambiguous, but still, I see my role as that of an artist, more than any of the others. Of the number of times that I worked with curators in presentations of the archive I never felt that there would be a juxtaposition of, or conflicting roles. In a simple way I'd say my role is one of organizing the archive according to its internal logic and main concept, which is defined by me, as well as thinking its relation with the surrounding context; whereas the role of the curator would rely more on creating an internal logic of the exhibition as a whole and the relations between the different artworks. This necessarily leads to dialogues between the two parts, but I think the roles are clearly differentiated and work in a complementary way. One exception to this might be the agreed intervention by Francesco Pedraglio in the organisation of the documents in the exhibition "I Will Not Throw Rocks", London, 2007. Though even in that case, his intervention was subordinated to the logic and concept of the archive.

Regarding authorship, the attribution is always a bit vague when working with appropriation, but I guess the main claim that might be made here is in the definition of the main concept that structures the archive. I would risk saying that the archive could exist only as idea, without the documents, and still keep the possibility of being regarded as an artwork - even if I'm aware that the existence of the documents and its presentations make the project assume a different character, which can be considered more interesting in several ways. A second claim of authorship could eventually comprise the way the documents are combined and the way they're presented, similar to a collage of a sort, but then again, as Godard put it in one of his interviews, « I always used citation, which is to say I never invented anything.»

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<sup>i</sup> The interview was conducted in London as part of Pedro Lagoa's residency at Gaswork Studios on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014. This is a revised version of the transcription edited by Lagoa and I. The last question was added to the interview in July 2016 during the revision.

<sup>ii</sup> According to the artist's recollection the venue was called 'Hausnummer elf' (referring to the door number) and was an artist run space in a former shop or bar...

<sup>iii</sup> FormContent is a curatorial initiative founded in 2007 by Pieter Vermeertel, Francesco Pedraglio and Caterina Riva in London. It was established with the intent of experimenting with exhibition formats and fostering collaborations that challenge artistic and curatorial roles. According to the curatorial description the exhibition *I Will Not Throw Rocks* "a funny exercise on the notion of schooling and takes the blurring role of artists and curators at its core." <http://archive.formcontent.org/exhibitions/i-will-not-throw-rocks/> Accessed: 15 August 2016.

<sup>iv</sup> The curator Lagoa was working with was Francesco Pedraglio.

<sup>v</sup> In *Novum Organum*, 1620 Francis Bacon differentiates between *Pars Construens* and *Pars Destruens*, the constructive and the destructive elements of destruction.

<sup>vii</sup> Reference to artist Gustav Metzger's five manifestos on Auto-Destructive Art, 1959-1964.

<sup>viii</sup> Reference to Edward L. Youman: *Chemical Atlas or The Chemistry of Familiar Objects*, first printed in 1856.

<sup>ix</sup> The exhibition was *12 Contemporaries: Present States*, Museo Serralves, Porto, 2014 featuring twelve emerging artists from Portugal whose practices reflect the shifting conditions of contemporary art production over the last decade.

## Appendix 4

Judit Bodor, Notes for remediating *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015*, September 2015.

<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>
Artist: <b>IVOR DAVIES</b>
Title: <b>ADAM ON ST AGNES' EVE (1968/2015)</b>
Venue: <b>NMW, Gallery 21</b>
Duration: 30 minutes on loop
Short Description: MULTIMEDIA INSTALLATION: 30 minutes sound/light installation on continuous loop and static installation
VMA identification: The artwork can be installed and duplicable through emulation (to keep a work alive when its original media may become obsolete) as specified below.
<p><b>Key artwork information:</b></p> <p>This 2015 multimedia installation is the second ever exhibition of <i>Adam on St Agnes' Eve</i>. The artwork was first exhibited as experimental theatre event as conceived by Ivor Davies and performed by a group of people on 21 January 1968 at the Debates Chamber of Swansea University as part of the Swansea Arts Festival. (Participants mentioned in descriptions include: Ivor Davies (director) Graham Robertson (assistance), Phil Thomas (stage manager), Neil Bowman (projectionist), Mary &amp; Ian (Adam &amp; Eve), Kay, Denny, Brian Clark, Derek Blake (photographer), Lois Turner, John Phillips, Ian Breakwell, Jackie Breakwell, and the members of the 98% Mom &amp; Apple Pie West Coast Rock and Roll Band (Paul Barrett, Nigel Lewis, Ricky Lewis, Richard Macaethy, John Donnelly, Cyril Petherick, Jefferey Oliver, Robery Llewellyn, Robert Peterson)</p> <p>The 2015 exhibition does not reconstruct the historic event but re-exhibits the artwork in its current form as defined by the artist in conversation with the curators and museum staff. The installation takes the original score as its starting point and takes both the artist's present intentions and the architectural and health and safety conditions of the museum into consideration. It includes remnants of the 1968 event (such as the sculptural cardboard objects <i>Eyes</i> and <i>Lips</i>), replica objects (cardboard boxes, slides, paper bags, piano, trolley) and a new 30 minutes audio and light installation following the 1968 instructions. The installation is completed with video and photographic documentation, correspondence, other ephemera relating to the 1968 performance and a 2015 documentary film recollecting the memory of the 1968 artwork through interviews with both Ivor Davies and John Plant. The installation presents <i>Adam on St Agnes' Eve</i> as an example of 'variable media' that survives in diverse physical formats over time.</p>
<b>List of components supplied as part of the artwork</b>
<p><b>MEDIA</b></p> <p>Please list the status of the media elements, describe its condition and enter key cataloguing information.</p> <p><b>1. Sound:</b></p> <p>1-10 minutes: bird song in forest (to source) Ambient surround sound.</p> <p>10-12 mins: 2 minutes recorded silence (to record in St Fagans, Ivor and Nick)</p>



12-13 mins: 1 minute gunfire sound (to source, low repeated artillery sound)  
 13-14 mins: 1 minute children on the playground sound (to source)  
 14-20 mins: no sound (in the original performance the pianist played random chords here, which we can replace by a sign encouraging visitors to play)  
 20-22 mins: 2 minutes 'conversation' between 'Eyes' and 'Lips'. (to record in St Fagans. Ivor and Nick)  
 22-23 mins: 1 minute silence (or recording of 'Country Jo', this is what the band played, TBC)  
 23-24 mins: 1 minutes silence  
 24-27 mins: 3 minutes silence (or 1960s rock and roll music, this was when the band was playing, we can record something or leave it silent, TBC)  
 27-30 mins: reading (this is when "the Surgeon was reading extracts from the Catholic Nurse's Standbook describing all kinds of anatomical activities" (Ivor's description on 20 August 1968) but we don't know what, either do a recording with Ivor or leave it silent, TBC)

Note: Ivor to decide to record rock and roll music and reading at the end to go with the rest of the audio or we can leave these performed parts silent and perhaps do a performance on the last day of the exhibition when we could have people in the white boxes slicing the screens, and when we left the silence in the audio could be filled with the performed elements, eg. We can have music as well as live reading by Ivor?

## 2. Slides:

12-13 mins: Female anatomical slide on projector 1 (left on drawing), screen 1 (image to be sourced: purely the abdomen 1830s).  
 13-14 mins: Male anatomical slide on projector 3 (right on drawing), screen 3 (image to be sourced: male top half, 1830s)  
 14-20 mins: Albrecht Durer: *Adam and Eve* (engraving, 1504) on projector 2 (middle) screen 2 (image to be sourced)  
 20-22 mins:  
 All three projectors showing all three slides on screens changing rapidly with added slides:  
 Hieronymus Bosch: *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (c. 1504 Prado, Madrid, probably the centre panel) (image to be sourced, add to projector 1)  
 Matthias Grunewald: *Paradise and Hell Painted*. 1510. (Left and right panels of a triptych oil on wood. Each panel 135 x 45 cm. Prado Madrid) (image to be sourced and add to projector 3)  
 20-23.30 (partially parallel with the slides above): archival film on screen 2. ~~Either over the Durer slide or on its own~~ (Ivor to define). (The archival film is a 3.30 minutes from 1968, on DVD, so it means it will stop when it runs out after the slides stop at 22 mins)  
 23-24 mins: projectors switched off.  
 24-30 mins: all projectors switched on again, randomly changing images (there were also sails at this point in from of the screens but we could perhaps use those for events)

## 3. Lights:

1. **Spot lights at the entrance: red and green. On between 1-10 minutes.** Positioned in a way that when visitors arrive their shadow is projected on walls. (in the original performance the shadows were on the ceiling but we have very high ceiling in the museum so that's not possible)
2. **Green spot lights** above 'Eyes' and 'Lips' coming up when they speak between 20-22 minutes.

3. **Red and blue lights** flashing rapidly, alternating between 23-24 minutes.

**5. Swansea documentary film with interviews (2015. DVD)**

Display: on box monitor on plinth (if we have) in the right hand corner of the space with headphones.

**Records from the Ivor Davies DiA Archive**

- Letter from John Plant, 18 September 1967, with envelope.
- Letter from Mrs. G.P. Rees to Ivor Davies, 2 January 1968.
- Letter from the Western Mail (K.R. James, Area Sales Development Representative) to Ivor Davies, 2 January 1968.
- Letter from John Plant to Ivor Davies, January 1968.
- Letter from Bram A. Moore to Ivor Davies, 3 January 1968.
- Letter from Peter Holliday to Ivor Davies, January 1968.
- Letter from Paul Barrett on behalf of THE 98% MOM AND APPLE PIE WEST COAST ROCK AND ROLL BAND to Ivor Davies, 22 January 1968.
- Letter from Ian Breakwell to Ivor Davies 29 January 1968.
- Two letters from A.J. Brooks and Stephen Hibbs, photographers to Ivor Davies, 1968.
- Letter from Stephen Hibbs, photographer, to Ivor Davies, 21 January 1969.
- Four letters from John Plant to Ivor Davies: 27 March 1969, 1969 (no date), 11 June 1969, 16 January 1970: and programme for Swansea University Arts Festival 1970
- Letter from Stephen Hibbs to Ivor Davies, 6 February 1989, with envelope
- Phone numbers and names.
- Five sheets with notes.
- Nine tickets for the event, 21 January 1968.
- Drawing and cue notes.
- Receipts for payment from Water Ellis & Son Ltd, for 350 brown paper bags, January 1968 and List of expenses, no date.
- Floor plan, Debates Chamber, Union House, Swansea, 1968.
- Thirty photos by Stephen Hibbs, and large scale photocopies.
- Four cue sheets with notes, different versions.
- Post-event description by Ivor Davies.
- Four brown paper bags with printed text advertising the event, used in the event.

These archival documents will be displayed on the walls on the right hand and on the wall between the pillars. Display method: TBC with archivist.

**DISPLAY EQUIPMENT**

- equipment required in order to display the work
- status of the equipment
- other furniture

Projectors, speakers.

Display strategy: emulation using digital projectors as identified by technical staff to replace the three projectors used in Swansea.



Plinth for brown paper bags: NMW  
Platform for Eyes and Lips: (size?)

## SCULPTURAL ELEMENTS

Please describe the condition of the sculptural elements and enter key cataloguing information.

1. *Lips and Eyes*, two cardboard boxes with papier colle lips and eyes, 1967, 122 x 45 x 21 cm (when standing)

Photo: Nick could you please add.

Description:

*Eyes and Lips* are two collaged cardboard boxes made with the help of Polly Patullo as part of a larger group of cardboard boxes worn by participants as 'costumes' in *Still Life Story I and II*, presented in Durham and Bristol in 1967. The image of the 'walking collage-box' was a key element of Davies performances in 1967-1968 and used again as part of *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* 1968 at the Swansea Arts Festival. According to the event score *I* and later description the two boxes embodied a male (eyes) and a female (lips) character as part of a kinetic environment. Although the boxes remained as the only 'authentic' material traces of the performances they are partial to the multiplicity of materiality embedded in these works.

Display: The decision about their presentation is following the artist's intention and the museum's policies of protecting authentic objects. The boxes are currently stored flat in the artist's studio. They will be presented in the 2015 exhibition as kinetic objects and restored in the museum in conversation to a level defined by the artist. To distinguish between these objects and replicas and to protect them from any damage the two boxes will be presented on a low platform.

2. *Suitcase* (1964) object, tempera 57 x 72 x 22 cm.



Description: bought it in New York 1964, painted it white when it was empty, then made a colour slide from a book of anatomic model, draw the projection onto the side of the suitcase and then colored the organs in different colors. On the back of the suitcase he projected a skeleton slide and draw over. Inside there was top of a human skull and some fleece from a Scottish sheep looking like human hair (still attached to the skin). The inside was similarly painted with more internal organs, Each images were covered with gauze, which was destroyed over time. Much later, in the late 1970s he used the suitcase as part of another artworks with big image of a poem by a medieval welsh poet and added letters to the large panel and a label on the suitcase. Exhibited in the ICA and Glasgow.

Display: the image of the anatomic model is a key image of Davies' works at the time however the suitcase have not been used in 1968 so its not part of this work. Show it somewhere else? In which case we also don't need the ironing board.

**3. Piano** An upright and a grand piano have been used in 1968. We might have only one in 2015. Displayed somewhere near the pillars.

In the 2015 two pianos have been sourced by NMW. **Description, size, position in place:** upright 1

**4. Trolley** – NMW. In the space close to eyes and lips.

**5. White cardboard boxes** 6ft tall. White. X 12. Behind the screen(s) in one row. Perhaps used in a performance at the end?

**5. Sails** – manila board, cardboard, on wooden sticks handheld by people, in front of screens as performed element (how to incorporate in the installation?, maybe a performance at the end?)

**7. Screen(s)** Three screens or one large screen displayed in front of the left wall.

#### **PACKING instructions**

##### **To be defined**

#### **WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED FOR THE DISPLAY OF THE WORK?**

Indicate what will need to be sourced before it goes on display

Slides: to source

Platform for Eyes and Lips

Sound sources for synchronized audio file: Judit, Ivor, Nick TBC

Paper bags: Judit to source (right at the entrance with a sign: "Pease wear paper bags as protection" Originally it said against explosives or against your egos. Do we want either?)

Plinth for paper bags

Interpretation panel for room: Nick, Judit

#### **DESCRIPTION OF THE MEDIA ELEMENTS in the installation/exhibition:**

**Slides:** originally from Edinburgh University. Lost, we use replicas projected on screen.

**Video documentation of Adam on St Agnes' Eve, 1968, 3.30 mins. (projected on middle screen)**

The video was originally shot on 16 mm film in 1968 (Mike Legget?). It has been migrated onto DVD by Peter Telfer between 2000-2004. Between 2011-2015 the sequence has been re-edited at the National Sound Archive, Aberystwyth following the order defined by the artist. At present there are different versions of the film footage.

The film footage will be projected on paper screen in the place of the (lost) film footage mentioned in the 1968 score.

The film shows the performed elements of the 1968 event such as the band playing, the strobe lights and the figures of Adam and Eve standing in the projection light.

The decision to project the archival footage as part of the new installation is strategic so the archival film provides a visual connection with the 1968 performance.



NMW to define

### **RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DETERIORATION OF SCULPTURAL ELEMENTS**

In this case a high risk of no longer being able to display this work would be associated with the sculptural elements being in a poor and unstable condition.

Emily and Ivor conservation plan

### **CONSERVATION PLAN**

This will relate to the risks identified above. Priorities will be set by the level of risk and the value of the component at risk.



**Swansea documentary film (2015)**

This film was made in April 2015 as part of the current exhibition project to recollect the artist and the organiser's memories of the 1968 event. The film was made in the original venue (Student's Union Building at Swansea University) one floor below the space that was then the Debates Chamber. The film was edited at NMW (Rhodri Viney and Judit Bodor) using a selection of archival documents from the Ivor Davies DiA Archive. The film will be displayed on a monitor with headphones.

Interviewees: Ivor Davies (artist) and John Plant (organizer of the 1968 Swansea Arts Festival)

Interviewer: Judit Bodor (Adjunct Curator, Doctoral Researcher, Aberystwyth University)

Camera: Rhodri Viney (NMW)

Format:

Duration: TBC

Language: English/Welsh

Subtitled

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

This statement is based on the views of the artist, the curator and the conservator as to what is important about the work. The aim is to provide a statement which will help guide future decisions about display of the work. For example in the installation *they shoot horses* the artist, Phil Collins, has said that the volume should be equivalent to a night club so that the viewer feels a rush of excitement as they enter the space. In other examples key aspects of the significance of components might relate to a link the curator has made to the themes of a work, its technology, the way one enters the space, a colour used, or the context or historical moment in which the work was made etc.

Ivor Davies so far (add more):

- the old projectors can be replaced by digital projectors
- objects can be replaced by replicas whenever possible
- it is important that Eyes and Lips are distinguishable as original fro replicas
- the performance elements shouldn't be reconstructed but new performances can happen in the space. Identify these:
- The atmosphere should be juxtaposition between a calm forest sound and war sounds
- It is important that the installation feels like a moving / kinetic environment with shadows of people when they come in and constantly changing imagery
- Calming atmosphere at the beginning but some element of disquiet
- Shadows are important

Judit Bodor/Nicholas Thornton:

It is important that we retrieve as much as possible from the 1968 instructions as far as sound, lighting and projection is concerned. The performed elements will be discussed with the artist whether and how it can be performed within the installation.

**ASSESSMENT OF THE GREATEST RISKS:**

NMW to define

**RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH POOR MANAGEMENT OF DISPLAY EQUIPMENT**

## INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS

### DESCRIPTION:

The installation is a 30 minutes sound/light and sculptural archival environment with objects as well as wall presentation following the 1968 score.  
When operating correctly the sound and light is synchronized and on a loop every 30 minutes.  
The Swansea documentary film can only be heard on headphones.  
General dimensions of the installation is the size of G21, in the future it might take a different dimension and arrangement.  
Installation photographs: to add later.

### EXHIBITION FORMAT DETAILS

Media format NTSC/PAL/SECAM Duration – if looped indicate duration of black on loop:  
If more than one channel indicate whether synchronized:  
Slides: digital  
Video discs indicate: frame accurate searching enabled/authored commands/structure of disc (titles, chapters)?  
Audio works indicate: stereo  
Details of available backups and spares: NMW

### EQUIPMENT LIST

List all equipment necessary for the proper display of the artwork, noting description, make, model, supplier, etc.

Defined by NMW (to be reassessed after the final plan)

#### Show Control:

- 1 Mediation Showmaster LE controller
- 1 Android Tablet/iPad
- 1 12 Port Network Switch
- 1 Show Control Programming

#### Media Server:

- 2 Media Edit, Encode & Load
- 1 MacMini (mediaServer)
- 1 Allen & Heath ICE-16 Audio Interface

#### Projection System:

- 3 Custom Build Paper Projection Screens
- 2 Canon Xeed WUX6000 Projector
- 1 Double Projector Unicol Pole Bracket
- 2 HDMI over Cat-5 Extender
- 4 HDMI Cable 2 m

#### Ambient Audio:

- 1 Surround Audio Amp
- 1 HDMI over Cat-5 Extender
- 2 HDMI Cable 2 m
- 4 Wall Speakers
- 100 Speaker Cable

#### Talking boxes:

- 2 Flat speaker
- Speaker Wire

#### Swansea film:

## Appendix 5

Emily O'Reilly, Rose Miller and Judit Bodor, "Curation, Conservation and the Artist in Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art", [Manuscript draft for publication in *Journal of Conservation*, Vol.61 sup.2. (2016) 127-132.

# Studies in Conservation

## Curation, Conservation and the Artist in Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art --Manuscript Draft--

<b>Manuscript Number:</b>	SIC487
<b>Full Title:</b>	Curation, Conservation and the Artist in Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art
<b>Article Type:</b>	Supplementary Issue Article
<b>Keywords:</b>	Destruction in art; Post-war art; Exhibition; Museum case study; behaviour-based conservation
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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>This paper examines the preservation and curatorial approaches explored for the exhibition 'Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art' at Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales (November 2015-March 2016). The collaboration between the artist, curator/researcher and conservators will be considered, and the evolving and flexible way in which transient pieces were presented/re-presented described. The paper offers a case study in the context of this exhibition and argues that regardless of whether it is in traditional media (such as painting) or as time-based media or performance art (unstable, and open to interpretation), Davies' work challenges a perception of artworks as finished, single-authored objects.</p>
<b>Funding Information:</b>	

Curation, conservation, and the artist in *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art*

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the preservation and curatorial approaches explored for the exhibition *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (November 2015–March 2016). The collaboration between the artist, curator/researcher and conservators is considered and the evolving and flexible way in which transient pieces were presented/re-presented is described. The paper offers a case study in the context of this exhibition and argues that regardless of whether it is in traditional media (such as painting) or as time-based media (unstable and open to interpretation), Davies' work challenges a perception of artworks as finished, single-authored objects.

### **Introduction**

Ivor Davies is a prominent figure in Wales as a painter and Welsh language activist, but relatively few people know about his extreme performances between 1966 and 1968 that included explosives, and connected him with the international avant-garde movement of the time through his involvement with the *Destruction in Art* symposium in London in 1966. Supported by an Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded doctoral research project between Aberystwyth University and Amgueddfa Cymru–National Museum Wales (AC–NMW) *Silent Explosion: Ivor Davies and Destruction in Art* was co-curated by Judit Bodor and curator Nick Thornton at AC–NMW, and developed in collaboration with the artist. This exhibition concept grew out of a desire to avoid existing art historical narratives and make

connections between artworks through Davies' lifelong interest in the relationship between creation, destruction and the transformation of materials. Artworks are thus presented as an interconnected 'repertoire' of actions, objects and motifs across media, reflecting an evolving world of continuous acts of recycling, revision and addition.

This paper looks at how the behaviour, inherent logic and materiality of artworks, combined with the context of the museum and the changing intentions of a living artist, can affect the methods of presentation and preservation through which viewers encounter and understand artworks. We will first describe our initial encounters with selected artworks from the 1950s and 1960s, looking first at three painted works, followed by a multimedia performance. We will discuss our approach to finding appropriate ways to treat and exhibit them within a retrospective that addressed the artist's interest in destruction in art. Finally we will reflect on our experience and findings to offer an example for 'saving the now'.

### **The challenges**

The first challenge of the exhibition was to consider how to work within a research project that involved an independent curator/researcher, a living artist and – with very few exceptions – artworks that are not in collections but remain in the possession of the artist. In this context, strategies for presentation and preservation were not only directed by the museum's institutional approach but needed also to address the various agendas of the artist and the research. This complex process resulted in somewhat compromised decisions that might even lead to the question of whether the preservation of intentionally auto-destructive art is itself an oxymoron.

Given Davies' interest in obsolescence and destruction as materials transform, the precarious nature of materiality – and thus the relationship between the artwork and time – was another issue to consider. Davies' works feature organic material as inbuilt elements of decay (for example soil or eggshells) or are left deliberately by the artist under conditions (for example damp or dusty environments) that promote ageing and deterioration. His multimedia performances – often considered to have disappeared – in fact involve what might be described as a 'multiplicity of materiality' (Lillemose,



2006) that can be exhibited, and include material remains (such as relics and documentation), actions, technological processes, as well as later interpretations.

From our perspectives as curator/researcher and conservators a third challenge was how or whether to protect the relevant artworks as objects (or in the case of the performance its documentary remains) and stabilize them for the duration of the exhibition, or to develop strategies that protect the essence or spirit of these artworks, which we defined as destruction, transformation and movement, and which should thus define the experience of the viewer. For Davies' paintings questions arose from the artist's changing intention between the conception of the artworks in the 1950s and their exhibition in 2015. In the case of the multimedia performance *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* the questions related more to the fact that the work is now only accessible as an archive, raising the dilemma of whether exhibiting this archive would neutralize the effect of these events as something to be experienced.

Our final challenge was moving objects from Davies' studio to the context of the museum. Thornton (2015, p. 55) describes the artist's studio as an 'immersive environment' that 'holds works and objects, at times paradoxically, in states of stasis and creative flux'; bringing them into the museum and out of the decaying studio, many of the works were frozen in time, suspended from their decay for the duration of the exhibition.

Indeed the concept of the exhibition as a whole seemed at odds with the concept of destructive art. If the exhibition temporarily stabilized otherwise transforming artworks, how does it interfere with their future life and understanding? Does the moving of artworks from the uncontrolled environment of the studio to an environmentally controlled gallery result in a different type of destruction? Although not necessarily visible, the continued deterioration that would have occurred had the objects remained in the studio is suspended in an exhibition and its course is, in some way, moved in a different direction.

## **The exhibition**

### *Objects/paintings*

Approaching paintings that had been stored in the artist's studio for decades, we questioned the level at which dust and damage might be interpreted by the audience as an artistic concept or a sign of neglect. This was largely addressed by a decision to dust frames but not paintings. The following three artworks illustrate more involved decision-making prompted by the unique situation of the 2015 exhibition. *Red Feeling* (ca. 1959–61), was formed by pressing plaster through coarse hessian glued onto the face of wooden strainers. When examined on the floor of the studio it had a layer of surface dirt and what was suspected to be fatty acid efflorescence sitting on the uppermost surfaces of the textured paint (Fig. 1). *Yellow Shadow* (1965) is a curved metal sheet attached to a chipboard support, covered in scrim and painted white with a yellow internal surface. It had been stored flat in the studio and showed substantial surface dirt as well as mildew spots and scattered scuffmarks. *Falling* (ca. 1956–7) is an oil painting with passages of adhered broken eggshells that were found to be flaking from the surface, with associated raised and cupped flakes of glue and paint. This painting also had extensive surface dirt.

A paintings conservation approach would have focused on the improvement of visual clarity through cleaning and stabilization. On all three artworks this would have involved the removal of later surface accretions where safely possible and the consolidation and laying of the raised flakes on *Falling*. In *Red Feeling* the white dust, dirt and efflorescence have created a new shape in the composition, following a slight convex bulge. This visual interruption of the original (1950s) surface would have given further impetus to remove the dirt and efflorescence.

During discussions with the artist, however, it became clear that the dust, later accretions and crumbling are integral to the works as evidence of material transformation through time. Stepping sideways and treating the works according to their intended behaviour rather than material condition, different decisions were made. We understood the essence of *Red Feeling* to involve a concern with material decay, so the dust and efflorescence were left in place, contributing to the debris that was already part of the rich surface patina. Contrasting to this, the intended behaviour of *Yellow Shadow* involved the reflection of the yellow internal surface on the painted white board, so the surface dirt and scuffs were removed.



*Falling* presented a more nuanced case, with three apparent choices. It could be left to decay, thus aligning with the perceived essence of the work. This presented a challenge to the ethics of conservation since the painting was being taken from its relatively safe studio storage (with time as the main agent of decay) to an exhibition, which involved risks associated with transport and hanging of a physically unstable work. A second option was for the artist to re-adhere the eggshell himself (the paintings conservator's preferred option). Indeed, Davies has a history of restoring his own works by filling and retouching discrete losses and adding structural supports when necessary. He proposed using egg (shaken with oil to plasticize it) brushed on with a long hair brush and left for half a day before being blotted to remove excess oil and prevent wrinkling. This would have maintained the artist's practice of making revisions and additions. The last option was that the work could be consolidated by the conservator with the aim of stabilizing it physically while not affecting the work visually. This final option was chosen by the artist himself, who as owner of the works was ultimately responsible for the decision. We consolidated the crumbling eggshell with BEVA® 371, chosen for its matt finish that allows stabilization without visual alteration of the crumbling surface.

### *Performance*

Davies' historical multimedia performance artwork *Adam on St Agnes' Eve* (1968) is now only accessible through its archives (Bodor, 2015). Our main concern was, therefore, to investigate the contents of this archive and its component elements could be exhibited and preserved, forming them into a new performance artwork. A question that arose was whether relics from the performance should be elevated as static art objects and presented in vitrines, or reanimated to reflect their original use as 'talking' boxes? Should we exhibit the projectors used in the 1968 performance even if they are now broken or, alternatively, project replica images using digital technology to allow the visitor to focus on what was projected? Should we use archival documents – such as cue sheets and props lists – as information for remediation or display them as documentary evidence of a past event? What does the exhibition of replicas alongside relics imply for the primacy that the 'auratic' object traditionally enjoys in museums? And finally how does the idea of remediation blur the concept of singular authorship in art?

The idea of conserving and displaying historical performance only through its material remains seemed to risk neutralizing the intention and effect of these events as something to be experienced. We decided to approach the archive (documents, objects, memories, processes and events) as the artwork's current 'aesthetic form' to raise questions about the relationships between the archive and the artwork, history and mythology, and performance and installation. The artist permitted us to use the 1968 cue sheets instead of the documentary film of the 1968 performance as our starting point for the remediation, thus distinguishing the idea of the artwork from its materialization at a certain moment of time. Focusing on the instructions instead of the documentary film helped us in analysing the ideas behind the work and negotiating between the different 'truths' of the score, the event, its memory and its documentation.

We worked with the artist to identify the elements he considers key to understanding and experiencing the artwork. These included projected imagery on layered surfaces and synchronized sound and light effects creating an environment that resembles 'a forest of sound and shadows' (Davies cited in Bodor, 2015, p. 145). Following extensive archival research we also asked Davies to identify appropriate replica objects and imagery as well as his preference for the preservation and presentation of performance remains. Based on this knowledge we created a multimedia installation entitled *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015* to distinguish it from the 1968 performance and to offer a present manifestation of the artwork that reinvents and preserves the work at once for the museum environment. The installation follows the instructions of the 1968 cue sheet as closely as possible, and we displayed this cue sheet alongside other archival material in the same gallery, almost as part of the installation.

Taking the exhibition as a form of conservation necessitated decisions about displaying relics within the installation environment. These included two cardboard boxes with collaged newspaper cuttings of 'eyes' and 'lips' that were used on numerous occasions during the 1960s in different performances including *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*. Their survival as part of Davies' archive has been serendipitous and they are now ghosts, relics of an event of the past rather than existing as artworks in their own right. In 2013 they were found stored flat, dismantled and wrapped in polythene

and on unwrapping a flutter of cut-out lips and eyes fell out like leaves. The boxes were also very dirty and dusty, the debris of time. The paper conservator's discussions with the artist and the curator centred on how far to go with cleaning and repairing them in preparation for display. One challenge was to return these now two-dimensional archival objects into three-dimensional boxes. The boxes are fragile with crucial, structural flaps now missing and the white lining paper used to cover the brown cardboard is torn and detached in places. Comparing the boxes with photographs taken in the 1960s the cut-outs were faded, having suffered physical damage, become detached or missing completely.

Slightly at odds with his idea of destruction becoming part of his art, Davies was keen to clean and reinvigorate the boxes completely, but this would have been impossible, not only because of the very short preparation time for the exhibition but because the ageing was irreversible. A compromise was reached that included removing the loose surface dirt, re-attaching the lining paper and the cut-outs that were detaching, as well as ironing out the most visually distracting creases and folds. No attempt was made to remove stains or replace losses. The final issue was to reform the cardboard into 'talking' boxes suspended in the gallery as if 'worn' by a human figure and reanimate them with hidden speakers as part of a synchronized sound and light environment that lasted 14 minutes (Figs 2 & 3). This involved repairing the flaps invisibly (achieved by hiding repair papers and tapes within the corrugated structure) and toning the new repair papers with watercolour (Fig. 4). On display the boxes look to the casual observer 'untouched' and 'aged' – not conserved. They remain dirty, stained, faded, and torn, with strips of pressure sensitive tape springing out.

## **Conclusion**

Unusually, the artist's intention in the case of this exhibition sometimes worked against his own methods as well as what we – curators and conservators - considered as the artwork's inherent logic. The act of consolidation by the conservator potentially raises the question whether the artwork can now essentially be considered as involved with ideas of destruction and transformation to the same degree. *Falling* became an example where the event of exhibiting influenced the artist's decision to repair artworks that were not intended to be stable at their conception. With *Adam on St Agnes' Eve 1968/2015* the act of remediation (through collaboration) raises questions

about whether the current installation can be considered as the same artwork and if so how it survives into the future.

The common perception of paintings as more durable (being physical objects) than event-focused performances has been questioned during this exhibition process. Whereas Davies' paintings and objects raised the question of whether and how to stabilize slowly disintegrating and decaying artworks for the duration of the exhibition, the conservation and exhibition of his performances through remediation allowed us to develop a new way of thinking about behaviour-based conservation in general. Despite curators and conservators embracing the paintings' changeable, transforming natures, the artist's revised desire to stabilize them overrode this understanding and redefined some previously self-destructive artworks as stable and collectable, as completed and finished objects.

While the preservation and presentation of his paintings have, ultimately, been determined by the artist as the single author of the artwork to the extent that he even repainted some of his works while they were installed for the show, the remediation process of performance as installation enforced collaboration. The exhibition as a form of preservation gave a context to *Adam on St Agnes' Eve*, rematerializing it temporarily in a form that was co-determined by the artist, curators, conservators, and technicians who collaborated in the decisions around its display (Fig. 5). The important outcome of this collaboration was to keep the 'essence' or 'spirit' of the work, including sensations such as the sounds and lights that strengthen it.

We consider the exhibition as a creative and temporary intervention in the artworks' life that, through strategies of preservation and presentation, altered them from our first encounters and will consequently influence the audience's encounters and their future understanding. Given that all the works will be returned to the artist, there is a stasis in their condition for the six-month duration of the exhibition. Their time on display becomes part of their history and when they return to the studio they return to oblivion, and the future of their survival – at least for 'the now' – remains in the artist's hands.

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## Captions

Figure 1 Detail of *Red Feeling* (1959–61) showing dust and efflorescence on the surface.

Figure 2 ‘Lips’ and ‘yyes’ boxes in *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve 1968/2015*.

Figure 3 Stands and speakers for ‘lips’ and ‘eyes’ boxes, during installation of *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve 1968/2015*.

Figure 4 Detail of the ‘lips’ box during treatment.

Figure 5 Installation view of *Adam on St Agnes’ Eve 1968/2015*.





figure 2

[Click here to download Colour figure IIC LA SIC 487 O'Reilly Fig 2.jpg](#)



figure 3

[Click here to download Colour figure IIC LA SIC 487 O'Reilly Fig 3.jpg](#)

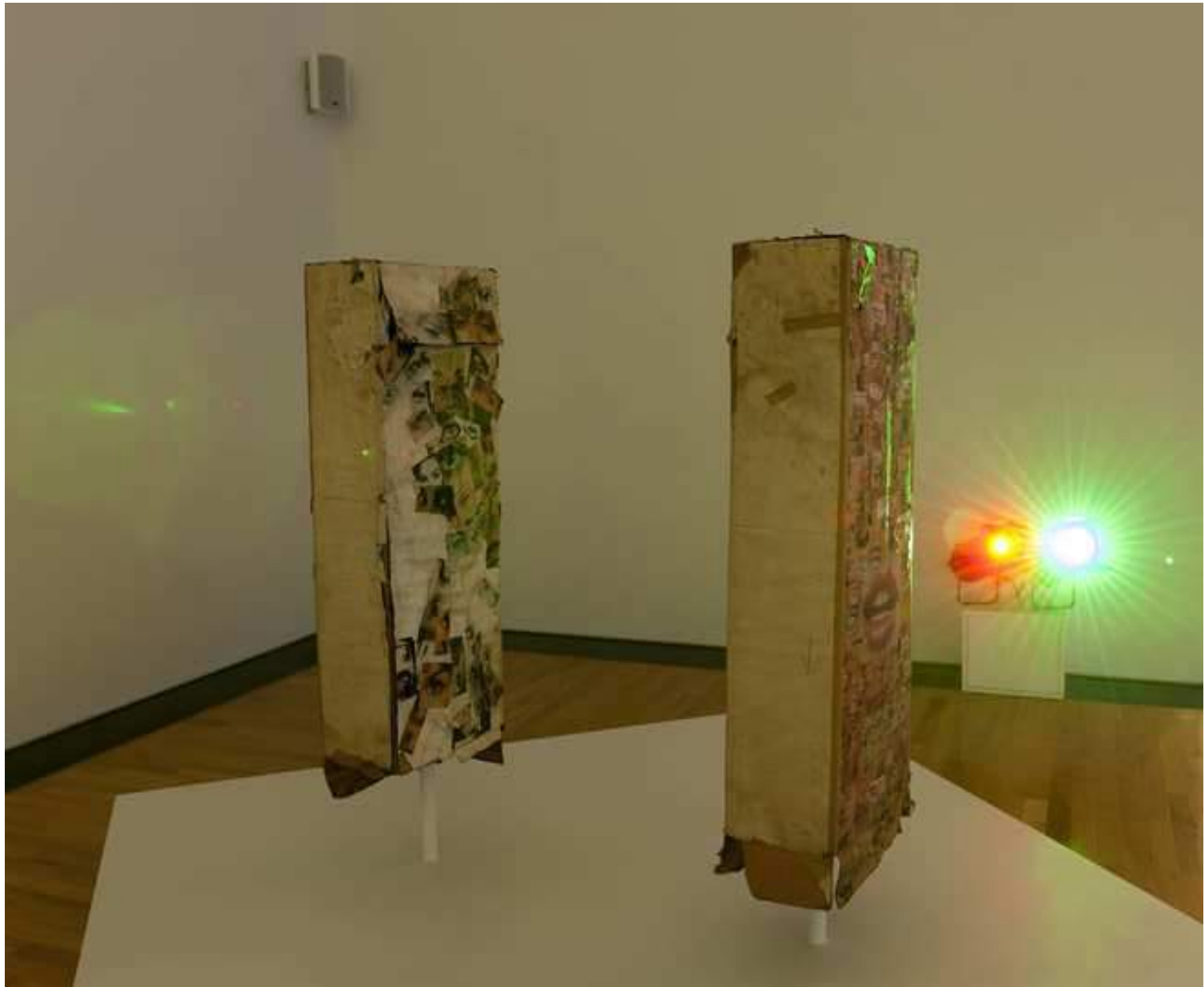






figure 5

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